

Major League System

- Chapter 208 - 208: To Koshien (2)

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Just as he turned to Yusuke to ask why, he heard a resounding slap from behind.

Everybody in the vicinity snapped their heads towards the direction of the sound, only to see Tatsuya with a large red hand print on his face. The culprit was currently leaving the scene, her shoes knocking the ground as she walked.

Tatsuya saw that his teammates' eyes were on him and couldn't help but shrug and give a helpless smile.

"Maybe I was a little too forward." He said, letting out a chuckle.

After he rejoined the group, he received a few jabs from the others. However, Tatsuya didn't seem to care. With the amount of times he'd been rejected in his life, this wasn't the first time he'd been slapped.

Around 2 minutes later, the woman returned with another man who seemed to be furious.

"Where is he!?"

The girl scanned the crowd before pointing in the team's direction.

"T-There he is! That's the scoundrel."

Jun happened to see the couple coming their way and saw the finger pointed at him.

His eyes went wide and he began to panic.

"M-Me!? I didn't do anything!"

Clearly the man didn't listen to his words as he swiftly made his way towards him. His facial expression was enough to know that he meant to deal out some physical punishment in that moment.

However, before he even got close to Jun there were 3 figures who stepped in front of him.

A muscular figure wearing a tight shirt, an average looking kid with wide shoulders and a tall and fit looking figure.

Instantly the man stopped his advance forward, feeling a sense of intimidation from those in front of him.

"W-What are you guys doing? This doesn't concern you."

Makoto stepped forward, the sunlight catching on the thin layer of sweat he'd worked up in the morning air. His muscles seemingly glistened as he stood stalwart in front of his team.

Ken smiled in response. It wasn't often that Makoto did something befitting of his captain status, but when he did, it was great.

"You've got the wrong guy. Here is the culprit."

With a single swift movement, the captain picked up Tatsuya by his shirt with ease and plonked him in front of the aggressor. The giant red hand print on his face was like the smoking barrel of the murder weapon, proving his guilt at a single glance.

Ken's smile stiffened, feeling all of the good thoughts he had about the captain dissipate in that moment.

'W-What the hell man?'

[Detecting intent to commit violence]

Mika's words were not talking about the boyfriend who had come to pick a fight, they were referring to himself who was resisting the urge to Karate chop the idiot Makoto.

However, Makoto's next move was a little surprising.

He placed his hand on Tatsuya's neck and forced him to bow. Yet he also bowed at the same time, throwing away any useless pride and apologizing in the open.

"Please forgive my friend for his actions."

With a nudge and a glare, he prompted Tatsuya to apologize.

"I-I'm sorry for offending your lady."

The man in question felt taken aback from the whole situation. After seeing the three step forward, he thought that he would be forced to back down and likely receive an ear lashing from his woman for the rest of the day.

However he wasn't expecting this turn of events. Seeing as the culprit was sincerely apologizing in front of him, he didn't feel as if he needed to take it further. He could also see that they were High Schoolers, making his decision even easier.

"J-Just be careful how you talk to women in the future." He said before turning around and going back the way he came from.

Ken could hear the woman begin to bicker with the man, however he merely ignored her, sticking true to his values.

Only after the two disappeared from view did Makoto raise his head and let out a small sigh of relief. Tatsuya tried to raise his head also, but he suddenly felt a crushing weight upon his shoulders.

"C-Captain... What are you doing?" He cried out, truly feeling regret in this moment.

"OOOOFFF"

Makoto delivered a short yet effective uppercut into the teen's stomach, forcing him into the shape of a prawn on the ground. After completing the punishment, he dusted off his hands and went back to doing his workout routine.

Ken let out a small chuckle, feeling his faith in the captain be restored. Originally he thought that he was just going to give up their teammate like that, but he knew now that he had been too hasty.

It was only now that he finally had some time to go greet Ai. By now she had already noticed his presence, yet she didn't want to interrupt him with the whole team around.

"H-Hey, nice weather we're having right?" Ken said.

Yet his face heated up in the next moment, cursing himself inwardly for saying something so stupid.

[Abnormal heart rate detec—]

'SHUT UP!'

[Tch]

There it was, the attitude that Ken thought he had heard from Mika before. It appeared after he had yelled at her. He suddenly felt a little bad, yet he was in dire straights at this moment.

His face seemed to morph a few times as he debated whether or not to try and start the conversation again.

Ai took one look at his turmoil and covered her mouth, her blue eyes dancing with amusement.

"Pffft"

"Hahahaha!"

Ai's laughter rang out, filling the air with mirth and causing those who heard it to feel their moods lift.

Ken felt a smile creep onto the corner of his lips, feeling his earlier embarrassment dissipate in the next moment. Having now recovered, he could finally act like a normal person in front of her.

The two talked for a little while but was interrupted shortly after by the coach.

"Alright you lot. We'll be heading in for the opening ceremony shortly. Head into the bathroom and get changed into your uniforms."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 209 - 209: Opening Ceremony (1)

Some time later, the team returned to the front of the stadium, now dressed in their white jerseys. The excitement was palpable as the opening ceremony grew near.

"Yokohama High School?"

A woman dressed in a blue dress with a white undershirt approached them. She was wearing a white brimmed hat and had a red flower pinned to her dress.

"Yes that's us." The coach replied.

"Please follow me, the ceremony will be beginning soon."

Most of the team recognized the outfit of the woman since they'd watched Nationals on television before. Each of the participating teams would have someone dressed like this at the front of their squad holding up a sign with the schools name inscribed on it.

"Okay you lot, let's go."

Seiji felt his body tingle as everything began to feel real. He'd been on the sideline for plenty of professional games, yet nothing could compare to this moment.

This was the first time that he would lead his own players onto the field at such a prestigious tournament. In that moment he felt a wave of pride for his players, causing his eyes to sting a little.

As everyone began to follow the lady in the blue dress, Chris waved goodbye to his son.

"I'll be watching, good luck!"

Ken smiled and waved back. He was currently full of motivation for the upcoming game.

They filtered into the stadium, bypassing the mass of people who had already begun to line up. Since majority of tickets were sold at the venue, if one didn't arrive early enough they would miss out entirely.

Since Yokohama wasn't a prestigious baseball club, not many of the people recognized them.

The teens curiously looked around as they were being lead towards the meeting point for all of the teams. At a single glance they looked like a bunch of country bumpkins, finally seeing the city after so many years in the countryside.

After a few minutes they finally arrived at their destination.

He saw a massive line of teams in all different colored jerseys. They were lined up 3 wide with a player at the front holding onto a flagpole with the schools flag situated on it.

In front of the flag bearer was a woman dressed exactly the same as their guide.

"We're here. Please line up in 3 rows and designate someone to hold the flag."

The woman spoke up before handing the flagpole to the coach. She then left briefly before returning with a sign which had the words "Yokohama High" written on it.

The team did as they were told, lining up in an orderly fashion.

Coach Hanada had already practiced this marching drill with the team in the previous week. He was not about to let the team embarrass themselves during the opening ceremony on such a glorious day.

The only thing that he hadn't decided on was who would carry the flag.

He carefully pulled out the Yokohama High flag from his bag and began to secure it to the flagpole. Seiji did so silently and intentionally, showing how much respect he had for it.

The flag was red white with the words Yokohama written in bold. While it was a simple design, it encapsulated the drive and work ethic of the team, built by constantly challenging themselves.

Once the flag was secured on the pole, he raised his head and turned his attention to the team. Seeing the faces of his pupils, Seiji felt a wave of pride and gratitude flood his psyche once more.

'I don't even care if we get knocked out in the first round... I'm so proud of these kids.'

However, he didn't let his emotions show too much as he didn't want to jinx anything.

"Who will be the flag bearer? I'll put the decision in your hands." He said with a smile.

In the end, he wanted to let the team decide who would have the honor. Since they were the ones who would walk out, it made sense that they would choose who to lead them.

"I think it's an easy choice." Hiroki said with a grin.

"Do we even need to think about it?" Yuta spoke up from the back.

Makoto crossed his arms and nodded, "I agree. There's no one else that can carry such a responsibility."

In the next moment, he walked forward and gently took the flagpole from the coach. In one motion he turned around and presented it to a tall figure who was standing in the middle.

"Eh?"

Ken blinked a few times as he stared at the flag in the outstretched arms of his captain in disbelief. He turned around and looked at his teammates who were either grinning or nodding in satisfaction.

"But why me?" He uttered in shock.

"Man, just take the damn flag." Shiro sent a short punch to his ribs, causing him to jump in response.

"Haha, Shiro is right. It's only right that our Ace represents us in the opening ceremony."

"You guys..."

Of course Ken felt honored to be considered for such a thing, even if he inwardly felt that he didn't deserve it. He took a step forward and received the flag from Makoto, bowing afterwards.

"Very good." Coach Hanada said, nodding in appreciation.

While he could have just given it to Ken, he wanted the team to choose for themselves.

The team stood around for another 30 minutes until finally it looked as if something was happening. The sound of a band echoed into the tunnel they were in, filling everyone with nerves.

"It's about to begin."

"Don't be nervous and make sure to enjoy yourselves. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for some."

With those wise words, Coach Hanada moved to the side of the tunnel and smiled. He wasn't able to join in on the ceremony so he would have to watch from afar as his team completed their lap of the field.

"Introducing the winners from last year, Sakushin Gakuin."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 210 - 210: Opening Ceremony (2)

Music began to ring out in the stadium from the marching band at the same time as the line began to inch forward slowly. The teens began fidget in anticipation of stepping onto the field.

"Sendai"

As the team continued to inch forward, Ken listened for the school names ahead of them. Since they had entered the tunnels from behind, he could only see the teams that were close by.

"Shinjuku"

His grip intensified on the flagpole after hearing the most recent school name. It was their first opponents that they'd have to face, and Ken's first big test since he'd regressed.

Would he be able to overturn fate? He wasn't sure, but he was certainly going to give it his all.

"Osaka Toin"

A loud cheer erupted from the crowd at the announcement of the next team, startling a few players. Since they were currently in Osaka, this team could be classed as having home field advantage.

Of course this wasn't actually their home field since it belonged to the Hanshin Tigers.

Upon hearing his brothers team, Ken couldn't help but smile knowing Daichi was not far from him right now.

In his past life they had attended Nationals together, yet this time they were on different teams. It was a little surreal, but he wouldn't change anything even if he had the opportunity to do so.

'I wanna play a game...'

After around 15 minutes, Yokohama could finally see the light shining in from the field into the tunnels. They were the second last team that would take the field.

"Yokohama High"

As the announcer called their name, the lady in the blue dress walked forward first, prompting the rest to follow. Ken adjusted his hat quickly before stepping onto the field.

Koshien stadium revealed itself to him in that moment, alongside the blinding summer sun which sent waves of heat to all beneath it.

Whatever thoughts were in Ken's mind before had now suddenly vanished. He looked around at the scenery in wonder, feeling a great sense of awe wash over him.

Despite seeing the stadium hundreds of times in his Image Training, there was nothing that could compare to the current scene that was unfolding before his eyes.

It was only now that his achievement seemed to have sunk in.

'I... I made it back.'

"Ah, There he is!"

Yuki and Naomi were sitting inside of the bakery, their attention tuned into the medium sized television which had been moved downstairs. The two were pointing at the screen with excitement as they watched Ken and his team enter the field.

"He looks so handsome Yuki-chan. How about I introduce him to my granddaughter."

At these words, Naomi glared at the elder woman who was a frequent customer of her bakery and looked as if she wanted to incite violence.

"Oi, he's already got a girlfriend. My Daughter."

Yet the grandma didn't seem to want to back down, ignoring Naomi completely.

"Yuki-chan, should we set up the meeting?"

Yuki couldn't help but let out a chuckle. She liked the fact that her son was suddenly so popular, however she shook her head.

"I have another son that's just as handsome, he was on the TV before as well. If she's cute I'll introduce them." She sent a wink to the grandma.

"Oh she's cute. Here have a look."

With that, the grandma pulled out her purse and handed a small photo to Yuki. Her face then turned smug as she turned her attention to Naomi.

Yuki grabbed the photo and almost dropped it from shock.

"O-Oh yeah she's cute grandma. But my other son is currently living in the dorm's in Osaka for High School. I'll let you know when he is back in town okay?" She gave a stiff smile and handed the photo back to the grandma politely.

"I'll look forward to it." She said with a smile.

Without another word she placed some money onto the counter and left with a bag of bread, not even acknowledging Naomi.

After the older woman finally left, Yuki couldn't help but let out a pained smile. Seeing her expression, Naomi spoke up with an amused tone.

"She couldn't have been that bad right?"

Yuki paled, "I don't think my poor Daichi would ever forgive me if I set up a date with her granddaughter."

"Hahahaha."

While the two were having a great time watching the opening ceremony, Ken and his team finally came to a stop after performing a lap around the field. They ended in a single file next to all the other teams in the center of the field.

Once the final team came into line, the music came to a stop and the next proceedings took place.

"Please stand for the National Anthem."

In the next moment the whole of the stadium rose to their feet before the band began. Hearing the fully packed stadium sing at once was a rare and wonderful thing, sending chills down one's spine.

Once the anthem finished and the crowd sat back down, the announcer introduced the next speaker.

There was a podium on the opposite end of the field where the chairman of the High School Baseball Federation stepped up to begin his speech.

Since Ken was at the front of the pack, his tall figure blocked out the view for all of his teammates, something that they hadn't thought of until this very moment.

However, the sound of the chairman's voice echoed around the arena as he began his speech. While the speech lasted for around 10 minutes, there wasn't too much content in it.

Ken was slightly amazed how much a single person could talk without saying anything too substantial. Though it was obvious by these thoughts that he'd never listened to a politician speak in person.

"Thank you all for attending this years Nationals."

Once the 10 minute speech was over, the music from the band began to play once more, filling the stadium with pleasing and celebratory music. Then in an orderly fashion, the blue dressed ladies marched the teams off in groups of 4 off the field.

Ken and his team were the last one's to leave the stadium, returning to the tunnels and finally reuniting with their coach.

"You guys did well out there, I'm very proud." He said with a grin.

"The first game starts in 30 minutes. Since we're not playing today we can either go and check in at the hotel or we can stay and watch the games."

It was a pretty unanimous decision all around.

"Let's scope out the competition."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 211 - 211: First Game (1)

The sound of a siren blasted out over the stadium, followed by the cheers of those in attendance. Ringing the siren was a tradition that dated back to as early as the 1930's, used to signify the beginning and ending of each match during Nationals.

Ken looked down at the field from his position, surrounded by his teammates. Since his father had gotten one of the general entry seats, it was likely that there were no seats left in his vicinity.

So he decided to stay with the team instead.

"Batting first, Short stop, Daisuke."

A beautiful voice and smooth cadence rang out over the stadium, soothing those who listened to it.

"Oh awesome, they actually announce your names here?" Tatsuya spoke up, feeling a bout of motivation.

"Yeah it's like a real professional game." Hiroki replied. He too seemed excited, though likely not for the same reasons as Tatsuya.

Ken was too focused on the field to listen to his teammates. He looked up at the jumbo screen which showed the teams currently playing, as well as showing a live feed of the match.

Sakushin Gakuin vs Osaka Toin

"Hey isn't that your brother?" Shiro said, pointing to the catcher who just appeared on the screen. Since he'd played against Daichi in middle school, he remembered his face.

"What? You have a brother?"

A number of voices rang out around him, shock evident in their features. They hadn't expected that Ken had a brother who was on the Osaka Toin squad.

"Yes yes, now be quiet. The game is starting." Ken waved them off, never taking his eyes off the field.

He wanted to see just how much Daichi had improved, while also getting a gauge of how good his team was. After all, he was planning on facing against them in the semi finals.

WOOOSH

PAH

"Strike!"

A cheer rang out as the first pitch was thrown, resulting in a blistering strike. Ken felt a shock run through his body as he witnessed the throw, instantly moving his attention to the jumbo screen.

"152km/h..."

"W-What!? 152km/h? Isn't that like 95 mph?" Yuta blurted out in shock.

Ken narrowed his eyes, reevaluating the figure upon the mound.

'Looks like last years champs are going to have a hard time this year.' Ken thought.

[Would user like to copy Yatsuo Tanaka's information for use in Image Training]

'Eh?'

Ken blinked a few times, almost not believing what he was hearing.

'You can do that?'

[Yes]

Once again, Ken felt a little attitude behind the reply, however it was overshadowed by the gravity of the situation. If he had guessed right, Mika should have the ability to create an AI version of Osaka's pitcher that he could bat against.

If this was true, then he had potentially opened up a whole new way of preparing for opponents. Not only could he hit their balls, he could also analyze their forms and come up with ways to play against them.

'Mika, will I be able to face whoever you copy in Image Training?'

[Yes]

'And how accurate will it be?'

[Depending on how much information the system can perceive, it can be up to 95% accuracy.]

Ken couldn't help but suck in a cold breath of air at this revelation. While his image training had been largely successful, it was largely dependent on the state of his physical abilities which meant he was unable to make any breakthroughs inside of it.

However with this timely addition, its usefulness had grown exponentially.

'Okay Mika, please copy Yatsuo's information.'

[Understood]

DING

1000 Major points has been deducted.

'Eh? W-What the hell?'

Ken felt his face flush after he received the notification.

[This is the cost for copying Yatsuo's information]

Mika's cold and unfeeling voice entered his mind, casually explaining the situation. However, there seemed to be a hint of goading behind the words, yet Ken was too gob smacked to call her out on it.

'W-Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?'

[User did not ask]

Ken felt his face heat up in anger. Just when he thought that his new AI was beginning to be helpful, she went and did something like this.

He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly through his mouth in an effort to compose himself. Now was not the time to be placing the blame on anyone, it could have been an honest mistake.

'Dear Mika, next time I ask you to copy someone's information, can you please let me know the cost first?'

Ken did his best to sound sincere and polite, so as not to tempt his new "Ally" into making any other "Mistakes" in the future.

[Understood]

Unaware of the inner turmoil Ken was experiencing, his teammates continued to watch the match. Unlike how they were in the beginning, their faces slowly turned serious.

"Strikeout! 3 outs, changeover."

After the call from the umpire entered their ears, a wave of whispers broke out.

"Man that pitcher is insane."

"His speed didn't drop below 150km/h the entire innings."

Only now did Ken realize that he had missed out on the first innings thanks to his little spat with Mika. It wasn't that their conversation took long, it was because it was over far too quick.

'3 up, 3 down. He really is talented... But he's not the only one.'

While others might only praise the pitcher for his throwing, there was also the mastermind behind the plays who dictates where and how to throw the ball.

Daichi was otherworldly when it came to leading.

Ken had been the recipient of his genius leads in his previous life. Even though it was his first year of high school, he was elevated to the same level as these monster pitchers at Nationals.

However, a catcher could only do so much in a game. Despite receiving the godlike leads from Daichi, he was thoroughly exposed by the Shinjuku lineup in their very first match at Koshien.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 212 - 212: First Game (2)

If Ken were to hazard a guess of his pitching grade in his previous life, he would probably say it was around the B+ to A- range. This just showed what kind of abilities that Daichi had to get him this far.

Only now did he realize how much talent his little brother had. Even then, catching wasn't his most frightening ability... It was his batting.

"Batting first, First Base, Takashi."

Ken turned his attention back to the game where he saw the Sakushin players now on the field. There was a large teen on the mound who had a slight pot belly, yet no one underestimated this guy.

This was the Ace who took his school's team to their first Nationals win in over 50 years. Since he was now in his 3rd year of high school, this was his last chance to chase that glory again before being forced to retire.

Wataru Shimizu stood upon the mound and began to throw some pitches to the catcher, getting his shoulder warmed up. After around 10 pitches he nodded to the umpire, insisting that he was ready to go.

"That guy was the Ace for their championship run right?" Hiroki who was sitting next to Ken asked aloud.

"Yeah, he also won player of the tournament." Ken stated.

"Mmm, it looks like Osaka might be in for a tough time."

Ken couldn't help but let out a chuckle at his friends words. He had no doubt that his brother would succeed in this match, it was only a matter of when.

DONG

Right on cue, the first batter Takashi slammed the ball just over 2nd bases head for an easy single, cruising his way onto first base after only 1 pitch.

"Batting second, Right Outfield, Tsutomu."

A lanky teen walked up to the batters box and squared up towards the mound, his face full of confidence despite facing the winners of the previous year.

Unfortunately for him, despite hitting on the first pitch, the ball was snatched out of the air by a diving catch in the infield, getting the first out on the board for Sakushin.

"It looks like it's not just Wataru that stands out." Yusuke said with a wry smile.

"It's nationals what did you expect?" Yuta added seriously.

While there were star players in each teams, they wouldn't have made it this far if the rest of the team weren't solid players as well.

There were over 3000 High Schools between the 47 prefectures of Japan who were all vying for a spot at Koshien. Only 49 teams who had a solid line up would be able to make it this far.

"Batting third, Pitcher, Yatsuo."

Ken's eyes widened in surprise. He hadn't expected that Yatsuo the Osaka Toin pitcher would also be the 3-hole. Generally, a pitcher would focus solely on pitching and therefore their batting skills would suffer as a result.

This only became more prevalent when one reached the professional leagues since Designated Hitters became available. Of course Ken wasn't naive enough to believe he was the only 2-way player in High School, but his circumstances were a little different.

'Wait, if Yatsuo can bat as well does that mean I can pitch against him too?'

[Yes, this information will also be captured]

Ken let out a satisfied smile as he heard Mika's monotonous voice. It looked like this was one of the main reasons why the cost had been so high to copy Yatsuo's information, or at least he hoped.

Yatsuo wasted no time, also going for the first pitch. There was a distinct confidence in his movements, swinging with no hesitation in his form.

DONG

The ball sailed into the right outfield, bouncing right in front of the outfielder. Despite collecting the ball in his stride and firing it to the infield, the runner made it to 3rd base safely while Yatsuo stood on the bag at first.

BA BUMP

"Batting fourth, Catcher, Daichi"

BA BUMP

Ken felt his heart beat loudly as his eyes focused on the next person who stepped up to the batters box. Seeing him in the white jersey with black pinstripes felt a little odd, but he thought it suited him.

Inwardly he was slightly nervous, but it was overshadowed by the blind faith he had in his brothers talent and work ethic.

'Show me how much you've improved lil bro.'

The runners on base turned their attention to the batters box, their faces filled with confidence. Oddly, Yatsuo didn't even take a lead towards second base, as if he was expecting something.

Unaware of the weird behavior of the runners on base, Wataru fixed his posture and nodded towards the catcher. He saw the baby face of the batter and could instantly tell he was a first year.

Yet his expression didn't change as he entered his wind up.

Due to his body shape, he had trouble lifting his knee above a certain height. Of course this didn't diminish his throwing ability too much since the torque he could generate was still immense.

WHOOSH

Ken's eyes never left Daichi.

He watched as his brother planted his left foot and twisted his body, swinging the bat through with grace. This was the form his father had taught them both yet Daichi's swing seemed to carry a dreadful aura which threatened to annihilate anything in its path.

DOOOOOOONG

The sound of his bat smashing the ball echoed through the stadium like a thunderclap, startling those who had not been paying attention.

Ken felt his body tremble in that moment, feeling as if the sound was reverberating in his chest. His eyes followed the ball which rocketed towards the outfield, with no signs of slowing down.

Daichi threw his bat to the ground and began his jog around the bases. His eyes were moving around the crowd as if he was trying to locate someone in particular.

When he rounded the third base he finally spotted who he was looking for.

The two brothers locked gazes somehow through the crowd. There were no words that needed to be spoken for them to understand each other.

'I won't lose.'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 213 - 213: Lead up to Day 2 (1)

The sun was beginning its retreat onto the horizon by the time everyone was leaving the stadium. Those departing were filled with satisfaction after witnessing some of the best High School teams battle today.

"Man I'm beat."

"Yeah me too, and we didn't even play today."

The Yokohama High team made their way out of the arena with mixed emotions, but everyone could agree that it had been a tiring day.

"Still, I can't believe you had such a talented brother Ken." Hiroki said, his face still full of awe.

"Yeah, why couldn't you have brought him here? We could use an upgrade at Catcher."

Tatsuya's words were loud enough that Yuta's ears perked up. He glared towards the back of the culprit's head and was about to go over and deliver some punishment.

"Yu-chan don't mind that smelly idiot." Yuko spoke up, grabbing Yuta's arm and holding it against her mountains.

"Y-You're right." He replied, feeling his face flush red.

"Tch."

Seeing the scene of Yuta's bliss, Tatsuya clicked his tongue in annoyance. His eyes drifted to Kaori, the other manager who was chatting with Ai, as an idea suddenly drifted into his head.

As if sensing his gaze, Kaori lifted her head and locked eyes with Tatsuya for a moment. He flashed her a wink, giving his best smile, the one which had a formidable 65% success rate.

However, a look of disgust crept onto the cute girls face as she quickly averted her gaze.

"Geh."

Tatsuya suddenly lost interest. Thanks to his long list of rejections, he was quick to get over such things, allowing him to focus on the next task at hand.

The group were on the way to their lodgings, since Yokohama was 3 hours away by bullet train. Thankfully for the coach, the school had provided the funds to house the players for Nationals since traveling every day would work out more expensive.

This meant that they could focus on competing, rather than having to travel so much.

However, since the length of their stay was not guaranteed, Seiji was tasked with booking the room for 2 days at a time in case they were eliminated at an early juncture.

Ken suddenly saw a tall figure standing outside talking to someone. Once he got a little closer he instantly recognized the two.

"I'll be back in a sec." He told his teammates before quickly jogging forward.

SLAP

"Nice play out there lil bro!"

Daichi who had just copped a slap to his behind from out of nowhere, clenched his cheeks and covered his bum out of reflex. He went from a relaxed posture to a stiffened toy soldier in an instant.

"Hahahaha!"

Chris couldn't help but roar with laughter seeing almost the exact scene of the other night play out in front of him. Yet this time the culprit was his son who had been on the receiving end earlier.

"K-Ken what the hell man?"

Daichi's face flushed red and his expression turned wild. He was about to lunge at his brother who just so happened to hide behind the tall figure of their father who was still in the middle of his laughing fit.

"Hey man, it's a common form of endearment over in America. If you wanna go to the Majors you'll need to get used to it." Ken grinned, enjoying the light atmosphere.

"Ah man that was classic." Chris said in English, wiping the tears which had formed on the corner of his eyes.

Seeing his father in such a good mood, Daichi couldn't help but smile, though he didn't forget to send a menacing gaze towards Ken afterwards.

"I was being serious though, that was some nice playing out there Daichi." Ken asserted, his expression turning serious.

"I knew you would win, I just didn't think it would be in 5 innings." He said with a crooked smile.

Daichi smiled in return, however he didn't seem surprised.

"Since Wataru pitched all through nationals last year, there is plenty of tape on him. Once we figured out his flaw there was no way we could lose."

His tone made it sound like it was a piece of cake, yet Ken knew that there would have been hours of research gone into discovering such a flaw.

Not only that, the team had to be good enough to capitalize on the flaw, otherwise it would have all been for naught.

"Still... Did you have to hit 3 home runs in only 4 innings?" Ken asked smilingly.

"Heh, I was showing off for Mom back home."

The trio let out a hollow chuckle almost in unison, thinking about the woman they left back in Yokohama.

"When is your game tomorrow Ken?" Chris asked expectantly.

"We'll be the first game tomorrow." He said with a smile.

Daichi grinned, sending a weak punch to his left arm, "You better not lose."

"I wouldn't even dream of it." Ken responded nonchalantly.

"Ken! Our bus is about to leave."

Ken heard Shiro's voice from behind him, beckoning for him to hurry up.

"I'll see you guys tomorrow." Ken said before running off to the team abruptly.

Daichi saw the short teen who'd called out before and felt as if he looked familiar. However, he shook his head a moment later and said his goodbyes to Ken.

Since they were in Osaka, he could just return to the school dorms instead of staying in a hotel for Nationals. This was a perk only available for the Osaka Prefecture.

"I should probably head back too Dad. I'll see you tomorrow, maybe we can watch together?"

"Sounds good now go get some rest."

Chris ruffled Daichi's hair and sent him on his way. After watching his retreating figure he let out a sigh, feeling some fatigue from the long day beginning to set in.

'I can't believe how much he's improved in such a short time.'

As someone who had dealt with professional players for the better part of 20 years, Chris was insanely impressed with Daichi's progress. Since he knew that Daichi knew nothing about baseball over a year ago, it made it even more crazy.

'I just hope Ken also does well.'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 214 - 214: Lead up to Day 2 (2)

The next morning, Ken woke up feeling refreshed. He inwardly thanked Mika again for her sleep protocol which allowed him to enter a deep sleep almost instantly.

As he got up and stretched, he saw a pair of haunting eyes with bags under them staring at him.

Ken jumped in fright as he quickly retreated to the wall, almost tripping on some others. The figure that was staring at him was pale and looked like a zombie, or even a corpse for that matter.

Since it was dark, it took his eyes some time to adjust.

It was only after a few moments that he recognized the figure who had been sleeping in the bed opposite him. Although sleeping might not have been the word he would use.

"Shiro what the hell are you doing man?" Ken whispered, trying not to wake up the others who were still asleep.

Shiro could only let out a groan in response, his body looking as if he hadn't slept in 3 days at the very least.

Feeling a little creeped out, Ken dodged the many bodies who were laying on futons in the room and grabbed his workout gear. Since it was 5am, there were still snores ringing out within the room.

Just as he was about to leave, he felt a hand grip his ankle, almost causing a squeal to leave his mouth.

"Wait for me."

The voice sounded half-asleep, but Ken recognized it as Hiroki almost instantly. Ken agreed to wait for the training junkie as he tried to calm down his beating heart.

Not long later they made their way out of the lodgings and began their run.

Ken couldn't help but smile. There was something peaceful about running in a brand new place, especially while watching the sun peak over the horizon to begin a new day.

After some prompting by Mika, he began to really push the workout, reaching around 90% of his running speed and almost leaving Hiroki in the dust.

The two returned around an hour later and went to shower.

Some people had roused from their slumber, but there were still others who were dead to the world.

Thankfully, the place they were staying at offered buffet breakfast which meant they could help themselves from 6am.

Hiroki, Yuta, Ken and Yusuke were sitting at one of the tables and enjoying a large spread of food. Since it was a continental breakfast, everything from pastries to bacon and eggs were available to eat.

Sooner or later, the rest of the team joined in for breakfast after the coach was forced to wake them up. They still needed to have a meeting before heading over to the stadium, so they were on a tight schedule.

Once everyone was done eating, the coach and assistant coach's took them to a room which was separate from the other patrons. The room looked like it was built for business conferences, yet it served their purpose perfectly.

"Okay I hope everyone got enough rest last night because we have a big match ahead of us today. I know we've already gone over the tactics, but I want to ingrain them into your brains."

Coach Hanada took on a serious expression as he went over the same source material they'd been talking about since the fixtures were released.

"Shinjuku have a really balanced lineup. Their lead-off batters are by far the best in Tokyo and have some of the highest on-base percentages we've seen in High School."

"Tatsuo Shiraki is going to be our main concern from the lead-off batters. If he gets on base, we can almost guarantee that he will steal a base whenever he gets the chance."

As the coach called out this name, Ken's face turned serious. The coach's words were true, in fact he might have even been underestimating him. But he also wasn't the only one to worry about.

Seiji continued for a little while longer, talking about the issues they'd face while defending against the batting line up.

"The reason why Shinjuku can play like this, is because of their Ace... Kei Hama."

"He's a southpaw pitcher who can pitch almost anything. Slider, sinker, curveball, changeup, essentially everything but a knuckleball. His pitches are so confusing that he even threw a perfect game in the Tokyo prefecture Tournament."

Some whispers rang out after this was pointed out. A perfect game was when the pitcher gave up no hits or runs, not even allowing a player onto first base for the whole 9 innings.

Only 16 had ever been recorded in the NPB, which went to show just how impressive such a feat was.

Of course the level of competition between the professional league and high school were not comparable, it didn't diminish the difficulty of throwing a perfect game.

After discussing what to look out for, the coach moved to the next important part.

"Okay for the lineup today we'll be going with the usual. If we win the toss I want us to bat first and try get as many runs on the board as possible."

"Ken, your target is to prevent Tatsuo from getting onto base as much as possible."

"Yes coach!" Ken called out, his tone full of confidence.

Hearing the confidence in his voice, Seiji pulled his lips into a smile.

"If you can keep him off the base the entire match... I'll take you all to get ramen tonight"

Suddenly an uproar began in the room as expectant gazes turned to Ken in the next moment. He saw the pleading and greedy eyes from his teammates and couldn't help but let out a chuckle.

"Just leave it to me!" He announced, wearing a smug expression.

"ORYAAAAH"

"RA MEN"

"RA MEN"

A chant for ramen broke out, bringing the teams morale higher.

'This was probably the coach's aim, to remove any nerves before the match.' Ken thought inwardly.

However, he still planned on doing as he said. With his new Showdown skill, it should help out in this regard.

'I can't wait.'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 215 - 215: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (1)

"Bow."

"Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu!"

The two teams were lined up as they bowed to each other, wishing for a good game. The sun was already in full swing as the siren sounded in the arena, prompting the crowd to cheer in anticipation.

"Yokohama won the coin toss and has chosen to bat first."

An announcer called out through the speakers, setting the scene for the game that was about to be played. Despite it being only 9am, the arena was packed with people who had been waiting since the early hours of the morning to get tickets.

Coach Hanada gathered his players and got their attention.

"We've worked hard all year for this moment guys so now is the time to put what you've learned into practice. Trust your hard work, trust your teammates and most of all, trust yourselves."

He looked at his players with a sense of pride, feeling his nerves disappear.

Seiji placed his hand forward, which was followed by Makoto, Ken and the others placing theirs on top. He turned to Makoto and nodded.

"YOKOHAMA!"

"FIGHT ON!"

Ken felt his adrenaline spike after participating in the war cry and it wasn't only him. Tatsuya who would usually saunter out to home plate in order to get the attention of the ladies, actually had a serious expression on his face.

He began some practice swings while he waited for the pitcher to warm up his shoulder, not once glancing into the crowd for any beauties.

Ken couldn't help but nod in appreciation at the change of attitude. This was an important match against a formidable foe, they could not afford to take it easy today.

A tall figure with bleach blond hair stood on the mound, looking like one of those delinquents one would see in Anime. As he threw balls to the catcher, one could see his unorthodox pitching form.

Instead of lifting his leg and stepping directly forward, Kei swept his right leg outwards in a sweeping motion as if he was trying to trip someone running past him.

However, despite looking a little weird, it was fast and effective. Not only could it throw off the batter, it made it a nightmare for those who wanted to try and steal bases.

The fact he was a southpaw essentially forced 1st base to stay put and not get any ideas.

Ken's eyes moved to the silent assassin who was standing at short stop. His messy brown hair was hidden by the blue cap, yet one could still see the bored expression plastered on his face.

His skin was a flawless white, yet it didn't seem pale. The sun seemed to reflect off of him, just as it would with polished jade or even fine china.

'Mika, use showdown on Tatsuo Shiraki.'

[Understood. Using skill: Showdown]

[Complete. All grades will increase by 2 when pitching against Tatsuo Shiraki]

A smirk crept onto Ken's face as he heard Mika's monotonous voice ring in his mind. This would be the first time he'd used showdown so he was excited to see what it could do in this match.

"Play ball!"

The umpire called out, prompting the crowd to cheer in response.

"Batting first, Left Outfield, Tatsuya."

Tatsuya stepped into the box, performing his usual ritual of tapping both his cleats and home plate before getting into his batting form. His eyes glanced at the coach for a moment before nodding.

He turned his attention back to the delinquent looking pitcher and gripped his bat tightly.

'I just need to get on base.'

Kei performed his sweeping wind up before blasting the ball towards the strike zone. The action was so quick that Tatsuya had trouble gauging the timing of the pitch.

WHOOSH

PAH

"Strike"

Not expecting the sudden speed, he'd swung well after the ball had landed in the catchers glove. He turned his attention to the board at the back of the stadium where he could see the speed of the pitch.

150km/h

Tatsuya sucked in a cold breath of air.

'This won't be easy.'

Before long the next pitch came flying toward him again. Anticipating the 150km/h fastball, he adjusted his timing and swung earlier, only to hear the crisp sound of the ball entering the catchers glove once more.

'Was that a slider?'

Sweat began to form on his brow as he glanced at the jumbo screen once more.

130km/h

He began to feel a little anxious, not knowing whether he'd be able to make contact with the ball, let alone make it onto base.

Feeling the pressure, he was about to look at the coach for directions. Yet as he turned his head, he saw the face of his brother staring at him intently. There was a mixture of belief and expectation within Jun's gaze, surprising him in that moment.

'You can do it, I believe in you.'

The words weren't said aloud, but Tatsuya heard them in his mind. He suddenly felt his confidence return abruptly, almost as if it was merely being hidden by all the pressure he was feeling.

"Ah, I almost did something lame." He murmured before a grin formed on his face.

The catcher Kenta looked weirdly at the expression on the batter's face.

'Is he talking to himself? What a weirdo...'

However he shook his head in the next moment, turning his attention to Kei on the mound.

'Let's go for another slider.' He said inwardly, placing his glove on the inside.

Since it was a slider from a lefty and Tatsuya batted right handed, the slider would break down and in towards the batter. This made it extremely difficult for them to be hit, which was what made Kei's arsenal so deadly.

The tall figure on the mound nodded and quickly performed his sweeping wind up, sending out his slider.

However, he was instantly shocked when Tatsuya moved his hand up on the bat and held it horizontally over the plate.

"B-Bunt!"

DING

Tatsuya sent the ball towards third before dropping the bat and accelerating at full speed towards first base. He didn't verify if the ball was going to be fair before pinning his ears back and yanking the throttle.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 216 - 216: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (2)

Kei had managed to recover enough after throwing his pitch to be the first to make it to the ball. He used his long limbs to reach down and collect the ball, yet he needed to correct his body posture before sending the throw to first.

The throw was a good one, shuttling its way toward the open glove of the first baseman.

However...

"Safe!"

Tatsuya felt as if all the weight on his shoulders had disappeared now that he arrived on first base. A wild smile appeared on his face as he sent a thumbs up to his brother on the field.

"Uwaaa! That kid is so fast."

"Wow he's handsome too."

Murmurs of appreciation for both the play and Tatsuya's appearance swept through the stadium. No one had expected a bunt from the very first batter of the game, yet it had paid off thanks to his quick speed.

As if this was the moment he'd been waiting for, Tatsuya surveyed the crowd, sending winks and grins to the women he thought were cute.

"Nice work Tatsuya!"

It wasn't just the crowd, the Yokohama dugout were also cheering the play.

"This is our chance Jun, keep it going okay?" Makoto walked onto the field and addressed the other speedster in their lineup.

Jun nodded, his usual timidity nowhere to be seen.

Kei returned to the mound, clicking his tongue in annoyance. He sent a glare to Tatsuya on first base as if telling him to stay put before he turned his attention back to home plate.

"Eh?"

He wiped his eyes before performing a double take, looking between first base and the batters box.

"Batting Second, Center Outfield, Jun."

Only after hearing the announcer did Kei finally realize he was not in fact seeing things and these were two different people.

After the brief sanity check, he returned to business as usual.

"Don't mind Kei, let's get the next guy out."

A few of his teammates called out to him, doing their best to reassure him.

WHOOSH

PAH

"Strike"

PAH

"Strike"

Kei sent two fastballs down the lane, one to the inside and one to the outside as directed by the catcher. They were just as fast as his first pitch, sitting around the 150km/h mark.

Jun had the same kind of trouble that his brother did, failing to get the timing on the fastball. His second swing had come close to making contact, but in the end he still missed.

Kenta nodded in satisfaction after receiving the pitches. They were sharp and accurate, more than enough to take out the best batters at nationals. He just needed to make the right leads and they could win any game.

He glanced at Jun in the batters box and then at his brother on first base.

'If he's a speedster like his twin, then I don't want him to bunt.' Kenta thought, trying to decide which pitch to call for.

Since he hadn't been expecting the bunt, calling for the much slower slider had worked against them in the end. Thus he quickly ruled out that pitch.

'It's 0-2, we could probably strike him out with a ball or even force a strikeout off a fouled bunt if he tries it.'

As if finally making up his mind, Kenta made his decision and called for a fastball just below the strike zone. It would make bunting difficult, while also giving the illusion it could be hit.

Kei nodded, performing his wind up and sending the ball right where it was asked for.

Jun reacted swiftly, twisting his body and beginning his swing. In a fraction of a second, he saw that the ball was far lower than it should be. He knew that if he continued the swing on its current course, it would miss. Search the * website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

So he made the decision to sacrifice his hitting power by pulling down on the bat, looking to just make contact and hope for the best. As long as he could get through the infield, he'd be able to advance onto base.

DONG

Somehow, the bat made contact with the ball and flew with some serious speed towards the gap between 3rd base and the short stop.

A look of adulation appeared on his face as Jun saw the ball about to bridge the gap.

The next scene that took place seemed like it was straight out of a movie.

The short stop took 3 quick steps towards the ball and launched himself forward, fully extending his body in an effort to catch the ball in mid air.

Time seemed to slow down as he snatched the ball with the glove, his entire body parallel to the ground. Yet instead of falling to the ground on his side, the figure curled up his body and landed in a commando roll before springing to his feet.

Everyone who saw this felt their jaws go slack.

Only two people didn't seem surprised, that was Kei the pitcher and Tatsuo who had performed the catch.

"Throw to first!" Kei yelled from the mound, trying to get the attention his teammate.

Tatsuo turned to Kei, blinking his eyes in confusion. It was only after he saw the extended arm pointing to first base that he did as he was told.

Yet it was too late.

Tatsuya had witnessed the gravity defying catch mid-way through his run to 2nd base. If it wasn't for the slow reactions of the fielder, he would have easily been out as well for a double play.

Kei felt a headache coming on as he looked at Tatsuo's blank expression. He didn't expect their genius's flaws to be revealed so early in the game.

The truth about Tatsuo was that he was the best baseball genius he'd ever seen. But there was only one problem...

He found the game boring so he never bothered to learn the rules.

If Ken were to know that he was toyed around with and beaten into the ground by a kid who didn't properly know how to play baseball, it would likely have crushed him.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 217 - 217: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (3)

The whole stadium was so shocked at the acrobatic play that they didn't even notice the lack of awareness from the fielder. Such flashy moves were not common on the baseball field, hence why it was such a shock.

Ken too couldn't help but feel his pulse quicken at such an athletic play. Yet there was something that was bothering him in that moment.

While it wasn't uncommon for mistakes to happen on the field, players would usually know to throw to first base after catching a ball, especially when there was a runner on base.

If it was in a later innings, Ken could have chalked it up to fatigue, but they had literally just started the game.

He narrowed his eyes and gazed at Tatsuo suspiciously. The guys face didn't even show a hint of remorse or embarrassment, almost as if he didn't care.

'Mika, use Identify on Tatsuo.'

[...]

After not hearing anything for a few moments, Ken tried once more.

'Use Identify on Tatsuo, please.'

[Understood]

Ken felt incredulous for a moment. Why did it seem like Mika had an attitude? Perhaps she actually had feelings and he had confused her monotonous and cold tone to mean the opposite.

He inwardly vowed to talk to her a little more politely.

DING

300 Major points deducted.

In the next moment a window appeared in front of him, detailing the status of Tatsuo.

NAME: Tatsuo Shiraki

AGE: 16

TALENT ASSESSMENT: ??

POTENTIAL: ??

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: SS-

>Pitching: B-

>Fielding: SSS-

>Game Intelligence: E+

>Mental: C

Additional Information: This player possesses unrivaled talent yet has never applied it to his game. Were it not for his friend in the baseball team, he would have already quit baseball out of boredom.

'W-WHAT!?!'

Ken almost fell off his chair as he read the system window of the mysterious youth. This was the first time he'd seen such ratings from someone. While it was crazy enough seeing SS and SSS grades, he was even more shocked to see an E rating.

Even when Ken had only the bare basics of the baseball rules memorized, his game intelligence was a C. So how would someone who made it to Nationals have such a glaring flaw in their repertoire?

'How could one's game intelligence be so low? Does he even know how to play baseball?'

[Answer: Player likely knows little to no baseball rules]

'...'

Ken felt his mind go blank for a moment as if a bomb had been dropped in his psyche. The player he'd been most worried about all this time... was a newbie?

He tried to think back to the game where he faced Shinjuku in his previous life, however his memory was rather rough. Since it had been almost 8 years ago for him, it was understandable that he couldn't remember much.

Even after combing his memories, there was nothing that stood out other than his extravagant defeat. He remembered the bored expression on the teens face as he stood upon the bases, as if taunting him.

No matter where he threw the ball, the kid would dash towards the next base with blinding speed. Even with Daichi's arm, it was impossible to catch him out.

Ken shook his head, unable to remember anything substantial.

"Strikeout!"

During Ken's revelation, Makoto had already faced a few pitches and was sent back to the dugout with a stiff expression on his face.

"I'll leave the rest to you Hiroki." He said, placing his hand on the teen's shoulder on the way past.

The way he said it was as if he'd achieved something instead of swinging and missing 3 times in a row. Yet Hiroki ignored him and stepped into the batters box.

In the meeting, Coach Hanada had stressed how important it was to get off to a good start in this match. Since they'd won the toss and chosen to bat first, it was his job to ensure that they would get on the board.

Hiroki gripped his bat tightly and turned his attention to Kei on the mound.

"Batting Fourth, 1st Base, Hiroki"

Kenta could feel the aura of the batter in front of him and instinctively knew that any easy pitches would be sent flying. It was common practice to have the most powerful hitter on the team batting fourth.

They were called the clean-up hitters, whose job is to "Clean up the bases" by getting big hits. Since they currently only had one player on base and 2 outs, there were a few options for Shinjuku to play this.

'Let's throw a few just outside the strike zone and see how he reacts.' Kenta said inwardly, calling for a ball to the outside.

Kei nodded before performing his unorthodox pitching action.

PAH

"Ball."

Hiroki didn't even flinch as he watched the fastball sail just outside and into the glove.

Kenta could only smile wryly as he threw the ball back to his pitcher. He had been hoping the guy would bite, or at least look like he was going to swing at the pitch, yet he was left disappointed.

However, he still had some breathing room. With Kei's wide range of pitches, he felt confident in giving the cleanup batter some troubles.

He crouched down and called for the next pitch, a sinker towards the outside. As long as Kei continued his accuracy, the ball should paint the bottom of the strike zone.

'Heh, even if you hit this it will only be a grounder.'

In one quick motion, the blond haired pitcher swept forward and threw his pitch right on target. The ball blitzed towards the strike zone, yet as it got closer, the ball dipped as a result from the heavy top spin.

Since it was being thrown from a southpaw, it was also breaking away from the right handed Hiroki.

Hiroki's eyes lit up as he saw the ball incoming. His body sprung into action as he planted his left foot and dug at the ball which was about to paint the bottom of the strike zone.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 218 - 218: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (4)

DING

Dust was sent flying into the air as the ball bounced on the ground in front of him and roared towards the gap between 1st and 2nd base.

Tatsuya who only had a short lead from 1st was almost hit by the ball as he tried to advance to next base. With his great athleticism he was able to hurdle the ball, avoiding a disaster in the infield.

Just before touching 2nd base, he turned his head to see where the ball had gone, only to see the center outfielder in the motion of throwing to his location.

He quickly stepped onto the bag and didn't run any further.

"W-What the hell is he doing?" Words of frustration rang out from the Yokohama dugout.

The coach who had been watching the location of the ball the whole time was currently mystified. The right outfielder had yet to even collect the ball from the ground, yet Tatsuya had stopped on second base instead of trying to make it to 3rd.

From his vantage point, it was difficult to see the whole play.

"It's that Center outfielder." Yuta replied, his face turned up in a wry smile.

Out of every player on the Yokohama squad, he was the one with the highest game intelligence apart from the coach. Since he'd seen the play, he decided to say it aloud so everyone could hear.

"That guy made it look like he had the ball and was throwing it to 2nd base. Tatsuya saw it out of the corner of his eye and was forced to make a split second decision." He explained, feeling a bit annoyed.

"Ah, so that was it..." The coach said.

Perhaps the play wouldn't have worked if it wasn't already the 2nd out of the innings, however there was not much they could do about it now.

At the same time thought, they were now aware that the Shinjuku players were tricky opponents, capable of using all sorts of tactics.

Ken also saw the situation and couldn't help but shake his head. Yet he felt a bout of determination afterwards. He had the opportunity to get some runs on the board and put the team ahead.

'All I need is one run. I won't let them get a single one in return...'

It was then that a beautiful voice rang out over the stadium.

"Batting 5th, Pitcher, Ken."

Ken felt thousands of eyes stare at his figure as he made his way into the batters box. He tapped home plate with his bat before hitting the tips of both his cleats.

As he took up his batting form, he couldn't help but smile widely. Despite batting in this very arena during his Image Training for over a year, experiencing the real thing was like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

"Hit a big one Ken!"

"Bring the runners home!"

"Show them your GUTS!"

Somewhere in the stands, Daichi and Chris watched on as Ken took his batting stance. Daichi was already at the edge of his seat, watching intently with his fists clenched tightly.

It could be said that he was much more nervous than the guy who was up to bat.

Chris too felt a bout of anxiety, not knowing what to do with himself.

He looked up at the Jumbo screen, only to see a close up of Ken's face wearing a wide grin as he looked towards the tall pitcher on the mound.

Seeing this, Chris couldn't help but let out a small laugh, feeling his nervousness slip away. He gave his son a nudge with his elbow and pointed to the big screen.

"Daichi, look."

"Hmm?"

After witnessing Ken's expression, Daichi almost choked on his own saliva. What kind of weirdo made such a face in the most important match of their life?

"Haaaah, I guess I was worried for nothing." He commented before sitting back in his chair.

"Hahaha, he always used to have this expression in elementary school." Chris said with a chuckle, however he stopped in the next moment, as if remembering something.

"But this is the first time I've seen him look like this when he's up to bat."

Back on the field, Ken was facing Kei, not even realizing what expression he was wearing. His focus was on what ball would be coming his way.

As soon as the blond haired pitcher began his wind up, the noise of the entire stadium seemingly disappeared. Ken could feel time slow down around him, instantly recognizing that his Crunch Time skill had activated.

Yet Ken had no reaction as he watched the ball roll off the pitchers fingertips.

PAH

"Strike"

"Eh? Couldn't he have hit that one?" Yusuke commented from the dugout after seeing that Ken didn't move an inch.

"Maybe he's waiting for a certain pitch." Yuta said.

Coach Hanada nodded in response, "Even though the slider is a bit slower than his usual pitches, it's difficult to hit since it's a southpaw vs right handed batter."

Kenta felt a grin form on his face as he saw the batter leave the pitch. He quickly threw the ball back to Kei and squatted down, calling for the next pitch.

Shortly after, the next pitch came with the exact same course.

Ken frowned, feeling a little annoyed at the disrespect.

DONG

The ball flew into the foul zone, carrying all the way into the crowd adjacent to the foul post.

Kenta shuddered before letting out a breath of relief. It seemed he had underestimated the batter by trying to get some cheap strikes. Thankfully the ball had gone foul and they now had a count of 0-2.

'We'll finish him off with a fastball.' Kenta said inwardly, getting into position and calling for the pitch on the outside.

Kei nodded before adjusting his cap. He sent a look to Hiroki on first base, even glancing at Tatsuya on second as if to remind them not to move.

Since there was already two outs, Tatsuya wasn't game enough to try and steal a base while Ken was in the batters box.

Kei performed his sweeping pitching action once more, sending a blazing fastball towards the open glove of Kenta.

The moment the ball left his fingertips, Ken's eyes widened in anticipation.

WHOOOOSH

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 219 - 219: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (5)

DOOOOOONG

DING

Ken felt a shockwave run through his body as the feeling of hitting the ball in the dead center of the bat attacked his senses. There was no better sensation for a batter than this moment.

He heard a notification from the system a fraction of a second later, however this was not the time to check it. After tracking the ball for a few moments, Ken's face morphed into a grin before casually dropping the bat.

"OHHHH YEAH!"

"Holy crap! What a hit!"

The Yokohama bench went into an uproar as the ball sailed towards the jumbo screen at the back of the stadium. Ai's face lit up with excitement as she watched the ball's trajectory.

THUD

A small thud sounded as the ball made it to its destination, yet it was drowned out by the roaring cheers throughout the stadium, directed at the tall teen who had just hit the ball.

'W-What the hell was that.' Kenta watched the tall figure run off, his mind full of questions.

The course was not an easy one, and it was only the first time that he'd faced a fastball. Yet without warning, he had hit the ball dead center for a 3-run home run.

Ken heard the cheers rain down on him as he made his victory lap around the field, ensuring he made contact with each of the bases.

The cheers seemed to be nourishment for his soul as he felt the accumulation of bitterness and regret slowly be washed away.

When he was alone and in pain in his apartment, how many times had he dreamed of this moment? It felt like all of his pain and suffering had been leading up to this point in time.

For a fleeting moment his happiness reached the peak.

'Please don't let this be a dream.'

Just as these thoughts fluttered into his head, he rounded third base and saw the excited faces of Tatsuya and Hiroki waiting for him to reach home.

The moment he touched home base he was greeted by the two, breaking out into high fives and words of praise.

"What a hit! That's our Ace."

"I knew you'd send us home."

Ken couldn't help but let out a laugh, reveling in the feeling of success. Of course the game hadn't ended yet, but it didn't mean he couldn't celebrate the small wins.

The moment he stepped into the dugout he was given the Hiroki treatment, copping tens of slaps onto the top of his helmet. Since he was so tall, some of the players like Shiro had to jump in order to reach him.

"Nice hit."

Seiji sounded like the calmest out of the bunch, but Ken could see his hand shaking violently by his side, his telltale sign that he was excited.

In the crowd, both Chris and Daichi were having a moment. They were dishing out high fives and knuckles like they were giving out free samples.

"That's my brother!"

"That's my BOY!"

Like a true proud father, Chris was yelling at the top of his lungs and celebrating with Daichi mirroring his actions. He had seen thousands of baseball matches in his life, yet this and Daichi's game were the loudest he'd ever been.

Those in the vicinity were surprised, but could only be swept up in the energetic cheering.

"YOKO HAMA"

"YOKO HAMA"

Soon enough, the crowd burst into a chant.

Yusuke stood at the top of the stairs and looked out at the crowd, feeling anxious.

"Ah man, this will be a hard act to follow..."

On the mound, Kei looked as if he'd just swallowed a lemon. This was the first time that his fastball had been hit so far, especially against a right handed batter.

Before the next batter could come onto the field, he saw Kenta jogging over to him with concern written on his face. He clicked his tongue in annoyance, but kept his mouth shut.

'I'm not so soft that I'll let a single home run get me down.'

Tatsuo had watched the whole sequence of events, from Kei's wind up to the immaculate batting form and home run strike.

"So cool..."

BA BUMP

BA BUMP

He felt his once dull heart start to beat loudly in his chest. Subconsciously he moved his hand to his chest and stared at the back of Ken who was walking back to the dugout, celebrating with his team.

He caught a glimpse of the joy in his expression and couldn't help but feel a complex emotion stir within him.

It was jealousy.

'W-What is this sensation?'

Tatsuo stared at his hand for a moment in disbelief, not understanding what was going on with him in that moment.

His mind began to pour over old memories, as if trying to compare to the person he'd just seen.

'Wow Tatsu! You're a genius. I can't believe you scored a hatrick in your first game!'

'You got 62 points against Tokyo Middle's basketball team? You're a genius!'

'You smashed the schools 100m track record, I can't believe it. What a genius.'

The words of his old school friends bounced around in his mind. Although they may seem like compliments, all they did was make him lose interest in the sport.

If it was so easy, then how could it be enjoyable?

There was no meaning in him doing something if there was no challenge.

Every year starting from Middle school, Tatsuo had tried a different sport in hopes of finding something that could cure his boredom. Judo, Basketball, Soccer, Track and Field...

He would always destroy the competition, defeating those who had dedicated their lives to the sport as if it were nothing. Even now after starting baseball in High School, they'd been running over the competition with ease.

However, this was the first time that he'd seen one of Kei's pitches get blasted out of the park. The sound produced from the bat hitting the ball dead center seemed to awaken something from within him.

'I want to do that too...'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 220 - 220: Shinjuku vs Yokohama (6)

When things finally calmed down, Ken took his seat on the bench. He had received a notification the moment after the bat made contact with the ball, so he was curious as to what happened.

He quickly opened his status window, only to see a flashing icon on the missions sub-menu.

It was only now that he remembered what had happened last night. He had received a notification and had forgotten to look at it before asking Mika to work her sleep magic.

It was ironic that he had yet to look at the mission since he had been looking forward to them ever since winning the Kanagawa Tournament.

While he had time, he quickly opened the missions menu and couldn't help but suck in a deep breath.

#NEW MISSION: Summer National Tournament

*Task 1: Strike out 50 players [0/50]

*Task 2: Hit 6 home runs [1/6]

*Task 3: Make the Quarter Finals of Koshien

*Task 4: Make the Semi Finals of Koshien

*Task 5: Make the Finals of Koshien

*Task 6: Win the National Tournament

*Task 7: Win player of the Tournament

REWARDS:

>Task 1 rewards - 3000 Major points

>Task 2 rewards - 3000 Major points

>Task 3 rewards - 7000 Major points

>Task 4 rewards - 7000 Major points + Gold Lottery ticket

>Task 5 rewards - 10,000 Major points + Gold Lottery ticket

>Task 6 rewards - 15,000 Major points + SS-Grade Physicality Elixir

>Task 7 rewards - 15,000 Major points + SS-Grade Mental Elixir

Hidden Task: ??? - Platinum ticket

While he was checking out the mission tasks and rewards, the beautiful voice made its appearance over the speakers once again.

"Batting 6th, 2nd Base, Yusuke."

As Yusuke made his way to the batters box, he did his best to shake off some of the anxiety he was experiencing. Of course he was excited since Ken had just hit a home run to put them up 3 runs, but it was a tough act to follow.

He glanced at the pitcher and could feel an intimidating glare coming his way. The eyes that stared at him were screaming, as if to declare that he would not even be able to sniff the next pitches.

And it wasn't too far from the truth.

PAH

"Strike."

PAH

"Strike."

WHOOSH

PAH

"Strikeout! 3 outs, changeover."

Yusuke received two fastballs followed by a slider. After having seen the two 150km/h fastballs, he'd adjusted his timing accordingly, only to get out with the breaking ball.

He walked back to the dugout with a wry smile on his face, feeling a little humiliated.

"Don't mind Yusuke, we'll get him next time." Makoto said, placing his large hand on the teen's shoulder.

"Captain..." Yusuke felt tears welling up in his eyes as he was consoled. It was true that misery loves company, so seeing that he wasn't the only one who struck out dramatically was enough to perk up his spirits a little.

"Remember our deal." Coach Hanada spoke up as Ken walked past, flashing him a grin.

Ken turned his head and nodded seriously, his face oozing determination.

'Eh? He doesn't think I'm serious right?' Seiji was a little taken aback at Ken's attitude, but he let out a small sigh afterwards. He should have known that teenagers were hot blooded and would absolutely take on the challenge.

Ken's mind was still reeling from the Summer Tournament mission that he'd been given. Just seeing the appearance of the SS-Grade Elixirs were enough to make his mouth water, yet there was something else which sounded even more enticing.

The Platinum Ticket...

He'd tried to ask Mika what it was, even making sure to use his manners. However, no matter how much he pried, the answer was the same.

[User has not discovered this reward yet, therefore its description is unavailable]

As for what the hidden task could be, he was even more clueless. It could be anything from batting accolades to pitching achievements, yet he would never get to know.

He almost wished that it had stayed hidden from his sight so he could just completely ignore it. However, rewards were secondary at this point.

They needed to win the game which meant he would have to play like their lives depended on it.

Ken began to warm up his shoulder, sending pitches to Yuta who was in position behind home plate. With each throw he began to get more focused and locked in, before he was finally ready.

He glanced at the umpire and nodded, indicating that he was ready to start the innings.

After a few moments and signals from the umpire, a voice rang out over the speakers, announcing the next player up to bat.

"Batting first for Shinjuku, Short stop, Tatsuo."

Ken's eyes narrowed as he glared intently at the youth with skin as flawless as jade. His body seemed to heat up the moment his opponent stepped into the batters box, a result from his showdown skill activating.

Seemingly oblivious to the stare he was receiving, Tatsuo was deep in thought.

'How was it again?'

He tapped the base with his bat, followed by the tips of both of his cleats before turning and facing Ken.

'T-That form...'

Ken's eyes widened in surprise as he saw his form being used by the opposition. It looked a little unnatural, but he could clearly spot the form that his father had taught both him and Daichi.

While it wasn't a trade secret and was considered rather orthodox by batting standards, he hadn't yet seen anyone replicate it since playing.

It wasn't only Ken that noticed the peculiarity.

"Hey, that's the form you taught us..." Daichi said, pointing to the kid in the batters box.

"Hmm... I think you're right." Chris said, equally as puzzled.

"I was taught this stance from my coach when I played in America. It allowed me to make good use of my height in reacting to pitches." He added, still in thought.

Ken shook his head, putting the situation to the back of his mind. Whether Tatsuo batted left-handed, right-handed or even backwards, it didn't change the fact that he needed to keep him off the base.

'Let's do this.'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.