

MAJOR LEAGUE SYSTEM

Chapter 8: First Pitch (2)

"Oh? You think we won't have any good first years that can make the starting line up this year?" Ken asked, his tone sounding a little condescending.

"Pfft. We're a strong team already. We made it to the top 4 of the Kanto Tournament last year don't you remember." Keisuke retorted, puffing out his chest with pride.

"Hehehe, if you say so."

Ken replied ominously before jogging towards the clubhouse, leaving Keisuke tilting his head in confusion.

"Oi, what's with that weird laugh?" He yelled out, chasing after Ken.

What his friend didn't know, was that there was a strong first year with super fast legs who would bump him down the batting order to number 2. However, Ken didn't bother mentioning anything as Keisuke probably wouldn't believe him.

With that, the two joined a few others who had also skipped out on the recruiting drive. Since it was only the first day of school, the coach would not be attending today, which meant they were free to do whatever.

"Hey Hikaru, can you catch a few balls for me?" Ken asked, warming up his shoulder.

A 2nd year suddenly turned around after hearing his name. His hair was long and tied into a ponytail which hung over his back, giving him an exotic look. However, other than that, his face was as normal and uninteresting as could be.

"Ah. Sure senpai, let me get my catching gear." Hikaru responded, a hint of excitement in his eyes.

Now that the 3rd years from last year had retired from middle school, the catcher position was now left open. To have the ace of the team directly ask him to catch for him filled Hikaru with joy.

He enthusiastically grabbed his gear and began to get changed.

Ken too got changed into his baseball uniform, also feeling excited. He was about to reclaim baseball, something that he thought he had lost for good.

Soon enough everyone left the locker room, yet no one was more pumped up than Ken himself. He made his way over to the bullpen with Hikaru in tow, unable to hide the dazzling grin which crept onto his face.

"Let's warm up first." Ken said, sending Hikaru to the other side of the bullpen.

Hikaru squatted down in place before holding his glove up, awaiting the throw. They then proceeded to throw back and forth while Ken warmed up his shoulder muscles.

He was thankful that there was no pain, everything seemed to be working as it was intended to. This filled him with the confidence he needed to start throwing for real.

"Okay, my shoulder's warm. Ready when you are Hikaru."

"Ready senpai!"

Ken felt his heart start beating in anticipation as he gripped the ball with his right hand. He brought his hands together before raising his arms and lifting his left knee high into his chest to begin his pitching action.

Then he leaned his body weight forward, keeping his right foot planted on the mound behind him. His left leg stretched out before landing on the ground in front of him, his foot pointed directly at the catcher.

The sound of rushing wind filled his ears as his right arm flew past his head like it was a whip. The ball was released at the perfect moment, rolling off the tips of Ken's fingers and spiraling through the air at over 80 miles per hour.

Hikaru felt the speed and power behind the pitch coming straight for him. The shock was so much that he almost instinctively shielded his face.

Fortunately for him, the ball flew straight into his open catcher glove as if it were magnetized, producing a crisp and clear pah! Sound.

"Whoa! Your pitching is amazing as always senpai." Hikaru called out, his face filled with wonder.

"If you can pitch like this, we might have a hope of winning this year!" He continued, waiting for the signal to throw the ball back to Ken.

However, Ken was not paying attention to him. He was staring at his right arm, his face looking pale with sweat dripping down his face.

'What is the meaning of this...!' Ken thought, his feeling in turmoil.

When he was in the middle of his throwing action, he felt a sharp pain assault his shoulder, almost causing him to lose control of the ball. He was more than familiar with the pain as it had haunted him for almost 6 years.

"Senpai, what's wrong?" Hikaru had seen Ken looking distractedly at his hand, so he ran over to check on him.

Ken snapped out of his reverie, turning to Hikaru with a forced smile. "It's nothing. I'm going to do some laps before heading home, let's do this another time."

"Huh?"

Seeing his senpai walking away after only 1 proper pitch, Hikaru couldn't help but feel disappointed. He thought that the team's ace had trusted him to catch his razor sharp pitches, however it looked like he failed to impress him.

"Ah, wait senpai. I'm sorry if I wasn't good enough to be your catcher. I'll keep trying my best to get better." He said, reaching his hand out for Ken's shoulder.

The moment Hikaru's hand touched his shoulder, he felt a shock wave of pain travel through his body, causing him to roar out.

"ARGH! Just leave me alone" He growled, trying to hide his pain and discomfort.

Hikaru quickly recoiled, not expecting such a reaction from their ace. He quickly bowed and apologized before running off to escape from the grouchy Ken.

Ken saw this and suddenly felt remorseful for lashing out, however he did not apologize, his mind was too preoccupied by the sudden resurgence of this pain.

'The pain was never this bad in middle school, I'm sure of it.'

Ken was deep in thought as he made his way back to the locker room. He was doing his best not to despair, but it was far too difficult.

Just when he thought that he could finally play baseball as usual again, he was faced with another hurdle.