

Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills

#Chapter 231: End of the season - Read Reincarnated Avatar;
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Chapter 231: End of the season

[English Pro Alliance League Table:]

- 1) Echelon – MP: 38; Points: 108
- 2) Phoenix Rising – MP: 38; Points: 103
- 3) Scarlet Rose – MP: 38 ; Points: 102
- 4) Cyber Squad – MP: 38; Points: 101
- 5) Juggernaut – MP: 38; Points: 92
- 6) Steel Dominion – MP: 38; Points: 83
- 7) Nightfall – MP: 38; Points: 82
- 8) Shadow Dominion – MP: 38; Points: 73
- 9) Cerberus Core – MP: 38; Points: 73
- 10) Lionheart Legacy – MP: 38; Points: 69
- 11) Oblivion Knights – MP: 38; Points: 68
- 12) Blazing Gryphons – MP: 38; Points: 65
- 13) Imperium Tyrannus – MP: 38; Points: 62
- 14) Pendragon Esports – MP: 38; Points: 58
- 15) Stormborn Esports – MP: 38; Points: 54
- 16) Avalon Sovereign – MP: 38; Points: 51
- 17) Exo Genesis – MP: 38; Points: 49

18) Cross Guild – MP: 38; Points: 46

19) Helix Nova – MP: 38; Points: 43

20) Crimson Crow – MP: 38; Points: 36

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[League Champions: Echelon]

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[Top 6 Playoffs:]

1) Phoenix Rising.

2) Scarlet Rose.

3) Cyber Squad.

4) Steel Dominion.

5) Juggernaut.

6) Steel Dominion.

...

The 12th season of the English Pro Alliance came to an end, and with it, a new league champion was crowned.

A new league champion for the first time in 5 years.

What a campaign. What a season.

So many records were broken.

The top 4 rivalry pushed the limits of what is achievable by a club in the English Pro Alliance, ripping point records apart as Echelon, Phoenix Rising, Scarlet Rose, and Cyber Squad all got above 100 points.

That was unprecedented in the history of the English Pro Alliance.

To the fans who paid attention to Matchday 38 of the English Pro Alliance? None of them regretted the decision as they witnessed one of the best matchdays in the history of the English Pro Alliance.

On that night, the main highlight was Echelon announcing themselves across England, crowning themselves league champions of England.

But that was not the only highlight of the final matchday of the season, of the end of the season.

There were far more exciting, tension-packed races than Echelon's title race that was already a forgone conclusion before matchday 38.

On that night, Steel Dominion fought against fate.

Not only did they have to win their game, at the same time, Nightfall had to lose their game. That was their only hope of securing playoff qualification, the main goal that they've been fighting towards all season.

The odds were against them on the night.

Nightfall knew what was at stake. They would do everything to win their final matchday of the season and secure playoff qualification for themselves.

In those final hours, Steel Dominion fans felt like their heart was being toyed with as they paid attention to 2 games at the same time.

They finished their game first, winning.

And then, they waited. Praying, hoping.

Well, the impossible happened.

Nightfall lost!

That was not the only drama of the final matchday of the English Pro Alliance season. Just like Steel Dominion fought for playoff qualification against Nightfall, Cross Guild also fought against relegation, Exo Genesis being their main rivals.

Cross Guild put their all into the game, gambling their season, and all their ambitions on the result of the final matchday of the season.

They prepared for the game like it was a death battle and their lives was on the line, and not that it was a video game.

They did everything possible to be in their best state, and then they welcomed the league leaders to their home stadium.

Cross Guild trained hard, they were prepared. They were determined. Their fans were loud. But sometimes, even all of this is not enough to win, not against a prime Echelon. Not against this Echelon.

[Cross Guild: 1 point]

[Echelon: 9 points]

A ruthless 1-9 performance loomed in the 3-way holographic screen at the end of the game, cementing Club Echelon as league champions.

Echelon tore Cross Guild apart.

And with that, Cross Guild's run came to an end, torn apart by a ruthless Echelon. Of course, it didn't matter anymore but for what it was worth, Exo Genesis also lost their final game of the season.

If only they won their game, then they would have avoided relegation.

But now, it was already too late.

Bristol City, The Crucible...

The stadium in Bristol City witnessed a contrast of emotions at the end of the game. On one side, majority of the fans in the stadium were left in a somber mood as soon as the game came to an end, mourning their team's loss.

With that loss, Cross Guild failed in their number 1 priority quest this season to secure their position in the English Pro Alliance.

They could not secure their position.

They lost. And now, they were relegated.

On one side, the majority, there was a somber silence, mixed with sobs as Cross Guild fans could not hold in their emotions.

On the other side though, pure ecstasy.

"And finally, they've done it!" The commentator announced excitedly.

"Echelon have managed to achieve the impossible".

"They won the league title in their debut season in the English Pro Alliance!"

"Not just that, it's an unbeaten title win!"

"What a season!"

"What a club!"

"What a team!"

"From God Noah to the least, Rosalind, what a season performance all of them put out. They performed their roles to perfection, all contributing to this incredible result, the unstoppable machine called Echelon".

"They deserve everything they're feeling right now".

"They're deserving league champions!"

As soon as the game came to an end, in Echelon's player booth, Noah leaned back in his chair, staring at his monitor with a lost look on his face.

There was a giddy smile lining his features.

And before he knew it, his teammates swarmed him, hugging him as they celebrated excitedly.

It seemed easy, what they did, but only they knew how much effort they actually put into the season.

The endless training sessions, the boring analysis sessions, the duels, the APM training, the finger coordination training.

None of it was easy, but pushed by their captain, they pushed through.

And now, they reaped the results.

They were league champions of England!

...

While on one side, Echelon celebrated their title win in Bristol City, The Crucible, Cross Guild's home stadium, on another side, Nightfall mourned their loss.

It was Matchday 38, the final game of the season.

It was Helix Nova, an already relegated club this season.

All the odds were in favor of Nightfall to go all the way and win the game, securing the first playoff qualification of the club's history.

And yet, at the last moment, in the last game, when it mattered most, Nightfall faltered and lost the team battle.

During the halftime break, they were literally leading 1-4 despite the fact that they were in away ground.

Everything pointed towards a dominant victory for them, but when the team battle started, things didn't go the way that they planned.

Yes, Helix Nova was a club already doomed to relegation.

They had nothing to fight for, well, who said so? They still have their pride to fight for, and the joy of their fans too.

This was why when the team battle started, Helix Nova's stadium came to life, the fans turning the stadium into a cauldron of noise in support of their team, their voices rising into an incredible crescendo.

The energy of the fans was electric.

And riding this energy, Helix Nova went on to play one of the best team battles of their season on Matchday 38.

Nightfall was just unlucky to be the one on the receiving end of their moment of magic, and they paid the price.

Nightfall lost. Helix Nova won.

Helix Nova was still relegated, but with that loss, Nightfall's goals and ambitions fell apart, their season unraveling as they lost the playoff spot.

As soon as the game came to an end, the Nightfall players collapsed right there in their player booths, most burying their heads in front of their monitors as they burst into tears, while others collapsed to the ground, unable to take the full weight of the loss.

It was heart wrenching.

The visiting away fans felt it even more. One moment, playoff qualification seemed closer than ever before and the next, it just disappeared.

Puff!

Just like that.

Like their players, lots of Nightfall fans also collapsed in tears.

In another part of England though, in Stormborn Esport's home stadium, Steel Dominion had the time of their lives, their players and fans erupting in a mad dance of joy as soon as the outcome of Nightfall's game was concluded.

They celebrated like mad men, dancing, jubilating.

Their joy could not be tamed.

And on another side, Cross Guild fans only felt mild disappointment as they were relegated from the English Pro Alliance.

Those final few matchdays for them was a rollercoaster, being involved in an exciting relegation battle and all.

They didn't like the result, but they knew that their players gave their all.

Echelon was just too overpowered.

And so, they applauded their players despite the loss, cheering them on even as Echelon continued celebrating their title win.

What a legendary season it truly was.

Chapter 232: League champions

Location: Stanford Bridge Stadium, London.

Date: End of Matchday 38.

The night London will never forget.

After conquering the Crucible in a titanic battle against Cross Guild, Echelon returned to their fortress, Stanford Bridge, as undisputed league champions of the 12th English Pro Alliance season.

They were so imperious that no other club managed to win against them once.

As for them? They won against the other 19 clubs in the English Pro Alliance at least was.

That was how dominant they were this season.

From Heathrow to the heart of Chelsea FC, the hired stadium, Stanford Bridge, it was as if the entire city breathed in Echelon black.

Tonight was Echelon's night.

It was a night of champions, and the celebration already started from the moment that the final bell rang at The Crucible in Bristol City.

Tens of thousands of fans pulled up that night, gathering in Stanford Bridge, awaiting the return of their heroes.

The moment their team bus pulled up outside the stadium, the atmosphere detonated into chaos, but it was beautiful chaos. Flares, chants, drums, fans beating on the glass, waving flags like it was a World Cup final.

Inside, Stanford Bridge had transformed into a glowing cauldron of sound and light.

The upper stands were a sea of lights, fans holding up phone flashlights like constellations. The lower tiers were deafening with chants.

"NO... AH! NO... AH!"

"ECHE... LON! ECHE... LON! WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS...!"

In the center of it all, surrounded by fog machines and glowing LEDs, the trophy pedestal sat under a lone spotlight.

Waiting.

The English Pro Alliance league trophy. The Crown of Ascension, as it is also officially known, is the 2nd most prestigious symbol of victory in the English Pro Alliance, an awe-inspiring artifact that reflects both the elegance of eSports and the gravitas of traditional sport.

It was the one trophy symbolizing league dominance in a season.

Standing at a height of 85 centimeters, just under 3 feet, and weighing 13.5 kilograms, it was forged from a rare alloy of platinum, obsidian glass, and polished steel, with gold-leaf accents along the edges.

Its base was a solid obsidian pedestal with each of the past winners engraved in spiraling runes around its circumference.

The upper part of the trophy formed a five-pronged crown, symbolic of the five starting players required to win a match. Each prong is shaped like an upward-rising flame, representing skill, strategy, synergy, resilience, and heart.

Floating inside the crown is a levitating crystal orb, suspended by hidden magnetic fields, engraved with the current season's number in Roman Numerals, XII for the current season.

The orb glowed faintly, adjusting color depending on lighting.

And of course, the league trophy had its symbolism.

The ascending prongs symbolized the climb from the bottom of the league to the peak of competition. This season, Echelon embodied that symbolism.

The floating orb represents the ever-changing, dynamic nature of the game and the shifting crown of dominance.

The obsidian base reflects the roots of eSports and Warstar in general; dark, gritty, born from basements and LAN cafes, and how far the video game had come.

Hidden beneath the base is a Latin engraving.

["Virtus. Sapientia. Gloria."]

In English, it meant,

["Virtue. Wisdom. Glory."]

English fans affectionately call it the Halow Crown or The Ascendant.

The English league trophy, it's considered the most photogenic trophy in global eSports. Players lifting it often do so under spotlights, creating a divine glow as the crystal orb reflects stadium lights.

When lifted, the trophy emits a low harmonic hum, a built-in resonant frequency meant to symbolize victory's song. Barely audible, but very real.

And tonight, Echelon was to lift it.

In the hands of Noah at Stanford Bridge, the Crown of Ascension looked less like a trophy and more like a coronation.

And for the rest of the league, it stood as a reminder of what it takes to rise to the top... and how hard it will be to take it back.

For the first time in 5 years, the English Pro Alliance had a new league champion not called Phoenix Rising.

And then, the moment of truth.

Time seemed to stop, breaths held, and then...

Noah raised the trophy high, and Stanford Bridge exploded.

BOOM!

Confetti cannons fired. Fireworks lit up the sky above. The stadium shook from the sheer weight of joy and euphoria.

The players rushed him, Genevieve leaping on his back as she could not hold herself. Benjamin soon lifted him from behind like a goofy powerlifter, Aria snatching the trophy to kiss it and to yell.

"I told you so!"

"I f*cking told you so!"

Caleb actually teared up, a truly crazy sight from a man so big, though he later claimed it was confetti dust.

Even the two substitutes, Jeff and Rosalind, were pulled into the dogpile as the entire squad paraded the trophy around the stadium, handing it between themselves like it was sacred.

The crowd clapped, sang, cried.

This wasn't just a championship. It was vindication. It was legacy.

To Noah and his crew, it was their comeback.

From the executive box, Nightingale, popular hip hop star and enigmatic owner of Club Echelon stood watching.

Usually reserved in matters relating to Club Echelon, this time he stood, arms folded over his chest, his expression soft, the shadow of a smile curling across his lips as he stared at them amid the celebrations.

His silver hair glimmered in the floodlights.

The camera cut to her. Nightingale gave the smallest nod.

In reality, it was taking all his willpower to stop himself from charging into the stage and stealing the shine from his players, celebrating like a mad man.

'We did it,' he thought, clenching his fists. 'We actually did it!'

He didn't need to speak. The entire league now knew.

Nightingale had built a dynasty.

...

That night, London didn't sleep.

Cars honked until 3am.

Pubs stayed open.

The Thames shimmered under fireworks.

Fans climbed telephone booths waving scarves, strangers hugged in the streets, chants echoed from alleyways to rooftops.

This was not just Echelon's victory, this was the third London coronation.

Over a decade ago, at the inception of the English Pro Alliance, a London club exerted their dominance over the league as the Kings... Cyber Squad.

With God Noah at the helm, in their prime, Cyber Squad was unstoppable, crushing any obstacle in their path.

Of course, they had rivals, brutal rivals in a prime Lionheart Legacy, a prime Juggernaut, Scarlet Rose, and the rest, but Cyber Squad still dominated, right until they no longer dominated.

For a while, no other club was able to take the mantle of total domination from them, until a 2nd London club burst into the scene... Phoenix Rising.

When Phoenix Rising burst into the scene, nobody took them serious until they destroyed every obstacle in their path, barging to the double of the league trophy and the Warstar RPG Champions League trophy in just their 3rd season in the English Pro Alliance.

And from then on, the Phoenix Rising dominance started.

Gabriel was no longer Gabriel, he became the new head of the new King in England, the new King born in London.

He became God Gabriel.

For 4 straight seasons, he dominated with his team, obliterating records, chasing Cyber Squad's history down with dominant final wins, the recent one being their win over Scarlet Rose last season to claim not just the Warstar RPG Champions league trophy, but the league trophy too.

But finally, just like Cyber Squad was dethroned years ago, Phoenix Rising was dethroned this season.

The culprit? Another London club.

The 3rd London club to burst into the scene... Echelon.

But this time, though it was a new club, it was not entirely unknown since popular names were at the helm of this new club.

Names like God Noah, Sword Saint Aria, those were the guys in the new club.

And now, it was time for a new London club to steal the show.

Right there in Stanford Bridge after lifting the trophy, the English Warstar executives presented the final awards of the season.

After crowning them League Champions, they presented the MVP award for the 12th season of the English Pro Alliance.

There was no debate. Noah was the deserving winner.

Noah won the 6th MVP of the Season award of his illustrious Warstar career.

The Best Support of the Season award went to Genevieve. Though she was mostly quiet, her teammates stealing the show, her solid skills was what kept Echelon in the game week in week out, helping them to keep on competing.

She was a deserving winner.

As for the Breakout Star of the Season award, Jeff snatched it after an impressive season under God Noah's tutelage as a Combat Mage.

As for the Play of the Season award, Benjamin won it for his tower dive triple kill vs Imperium Tyrannus.

Aria won the Most Feared Duelist award.

Caleb won the Best Strategist award.

Echelon claimed a clean sweep of all the awards, another new record in the history of the English Pro Alliance. Never had one club claimed all the awards, before tonight, before this season.

And as the lights dimmed on a historic season, one truth remained unshakable.

The Pro Alliance belonged to Echelon now.

And the rest of the league would spend the off-season trying to catch up.

But tonight?

Tonight was for the champions.

And their city.

And their dreams, fulfilled.

Chapter 233: Playoff draw

The regular league season was over.

But it was not the end for the top clubs of the English Pro Alliance.

For the top 6 clubs in the English Pro Alliance league table, there was still an avenue for them to compete and challenge for the biggest trophy in the English Pro Alliance, the Warstar RPG Champions League trophy.

This was why team Echelon restrained their league trophy celebrations to only one day. The next day, they went right back to training and post-game recovery.

The day after, making it 2 days since Matchday 38, a big event in English Warstar was finally about to take place... the playoff draw.

It took place in the Pro Warstar headquarters in England, in Manchester.

Inside the big event center...

The opening music faded into thunderous applause, golden spotlights scanning the dazzling auditorium at the Geneva.

Fans and players from across Europe watched from the grand venue, while millions tuned in online and on TV. The Warstar RPG Champions League logo glowed at the center stage.

It was one of the most significant events in every English Pro Alliance season since its inception. Tonight, the playoff draw would be made.

The first host, Marcus LeClaire, a former Warstar pro of the English Pro Alliance kickstarted the show.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the most anticipated moment in Warstar RPG since the end of matchday 38!"

"The league season may be over, but tonight, history begins again".

"This... is the Champions League Playoff Draw!"

The fans and players buzzed with excitement, speculations flying wild in the air as the second host of the show, Irene Valdez, a retired pro and analyst of the English Pro Alliance took over.

"6 teams. Two quarter finals. Two semifinals. One chance to write themselves into legend".

"We've seen meteoric rises, heartbreaking collapses, and sheer brilliance all season long. But now? This is where giants fall and immortals rise".

Marcus took over. "And let's not forget... this is Echelon's debut in the Champions League stage after a historic debut domestic run in the English Pro Alliance".

"But can they carry that momentum consistently against just England's elite?"

"Or will someone like Cyber Squad, wounded but dangerous, rise again? What about Juggernaut, the dark horse team turned power player? And of course Phoenix Rising, the unstoppable tank that never stops rolling!"

"Let's not forget Scarlet Rose too. To me, they were the 2nd-best club for large swathes of this season, it took an incredible moment of determination and staying locked-in for Phoenix Rising to topple them in the league table".

Irene smiled. "I have a hunch that just like this season brought with it so many surprises, so many records being broken, we'll also experience a playoff battle unlike ever before".

"The top 6 clubs all played at an elite level just to make it to this stage. They won't want to leave without putting up a fight".

"Mark my words friends," she smirked. "This battle shall be legendary!"

The camera panned to the teams sitting in front-row seats, all wearing their club jackets. All 6 clubs that secured playoff qualification this season had a 2-player slot to be represented in the playoff draw.

For Echelon, it was Noah and Jeff.

Noah was calm and focused. Gabriel? He leaned back confidently in his chair, clearly looking forward to the draw.

Juggernaut's captain was masked and unreadable. Steel Dominion's captain? He was stoic and hungry.

Having been involved in a tight and tense playoff qualification battle with Nightfall, to finally qualify, this captain felt that it was fate. And now, he believed that his club could prove their doubters wrong and go all the way.

He was extremely motivated.

On another side, Caster and Anabella sat, both smiling at the camera when it panned in their direction.

As for Scarlet Rose's representatives? Jonathan and Chris made it to the playoff draw. When the camera panned in their direction, Chris looked at it with a stoic face, while Jonathan smirked and winked at the camera.

And finally, it was time.

Golden bowls glimmered on stage as the drawmaster stepped forward.

"By the decree of the Warstar Committee, and according to the playoff rankings, the matchups will be drawn at random. The first team drawn will host the first quarterfinal game".

"Let's begin!"

The drum roll began as the crowd held their breath.

It started.

And in a jiffy, it was over.

DING!

The holographic screen A.I made a sound, and then it displayed the result of the first playoffs draw.

[Quarterfinal One: Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion]

Marcus reacted. "Wow! Right off the bat! The blazing rebels of Scarlet Rose versus the iron-fisted Steel Dominion!"

"Two drastically different philosophies. Chaos and freedom against order and control. That's fireworks waiting to happen!"

"And a revenge arc for Steel Dominion too," Irene chipped in. "Having lost both of their league games against the Leeds-based club, can Steel Dominion do it in the playoff round?"

"Well, expect mind games, counterpicks, and no mercy".

"Stay tuned on our TV to get live updates".

The result of the second quarterfinal draw followed.

DING!

[Quarterfinal Two: Cyber Squad vs Juggernaut]

"There it is," Marcus started. "That's the draw of destiny".

Irene grinned. "London vs Birmingham City, what a game we have looming in the horizon! Finesse versus force. Caster versus the wall of Birmingham City".

"This season, they've been fearsome, unstoppable at times".

"If anyone can crack Juggernaut's code, it's Cyber Squad's Battle God, Stinger of War. But one slip, and they're done".

And then...

DING!

[Semifinal Seed One: Scarlet Rose]

[Semifinal Seed Two: Echelon]

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[Quarterfinal 1:]

[Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion]

[Winner faces Scarlet Rose in the Semifinals]

...

[Quarterfinal 2:]

[Cyber Squad vs Juggernaut]

[Winner faces Echelon in the Semifinals]

"And there you have it," Marcus smiled, staring straight at the camera. "No second chances. No group stages".

"It's the playoff, and here? It's just do or die, battle for battle, for the greatest prize in Warstar".

Irene chipped in finally. "See you in the playoffs. Because now, it's war".

"See you in 3 days".

Like Irene said, Warstar fans around England had to wait 3 days before the first quarterfinal game of the Warstar RPG Champions League.

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Fans were still reeling from the conclusion of arguably the most entertaining and thrilling season in the history of the English Pro Alliance when the playoffs loomed, already knocking at the door.

And once again, the top 6 clubs were forced back to the training room.

These days, Echelon's club building felt like a cave. A cave where team Echelon trained for peak fitness in preparations for the war of the playoffs.

Once again, Noah was at the helm, drilling his team, forcing them through analysis sessions before game-playing sessions.

Unlike the regular league season where you could recover from a blunder in the next game, in the playoff, there was no next game.

You lose, you leave.

You win, you progress.

No two ways about it.

This was why Noah drilled his team even more intensely than usual. He trusted that his old friends understood the stakes, but Noah already began realizing that the substitutes, Jeff and Rosalind became arrogant since they won the league trophy.

Thankfully, they still had some time till the war of the playoffs started, more than enough time for Noah to knock some humility back into his players.

He didn't hold back at all, humbling them by beating them over and over again till they were forced to go back to the basics and train.

Not just Noah and Echelon, the 5 other clubs trained.

Gabriel? He pushed his team more than ever before in the preparations for the playoff battle that loomed in the horizon.

At some point, some of the players complained, but Gabriel didn't care.

What mattered was winning, everything else was just noise. This was what he believed, and he worked with that mindset.

Scarlet Rose? Jonathan also drilled his team, making sure that they were fit both physically and psychologically for another big moment of their careers.

As for Juggernaut and Steel Dominion? As the certified underdogs of the playoff round, both clubs decided to make up for their inferiority by training more.

Steel Dominion players trained like men possessed.

While all these happened, time moved fast.

Day 1 passed, then Day 2, then Day 3, then... it came.

D-day was here.

This time, not just England, millions of Warstar fans around the world tuned in to the first quarterfinal playoff battle of one of the biggest Warstar-playing nations in the world.

The game was played in a neutral stadium... the Etihad in Manchester.

[Quarterfinal One: Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion]

By an hour before the game, the Etihad became filled to the brim with tens of thousands of fans, fans sharing the crimson colors of Scarlet Rose and the gray color of Steel Dominion.

The pre-game ceremony was anchored by Drake, setting the stadium ablaze, and then the game started.

[LOADING...]

[FIRST ROUND: INDIVIDUAL BATTLE]

Chapter 234: Playoff Quarterfinal; Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion

[LOADING...]

[FIRST ROUND: INDIVIDUAL BATTLE]

BOOM!

The Etihad Stadium in Manchester exploded in a supernova of roars as the opposing fanbases welcomed their anchor Avatars to the arena for the first battle of the individual battle round.

It was a neutral ground, and so, both fanbases received equal quotas to fill around the stadium.

It was not 50/50 around the stadium though.

In the build-up to the game, having failed to meet up to buy the game tickets on time, thousands, if not tens of thousands of Scarlet Rose fans paid premium on underground channels to get the game tickets from fans who've already bought before... Steel Dominion fans.

This was why despite the fact that the first quarterfinal was played in neutral ground, the Scarlet Rose fanbase dominated with their number, crimson colors and banners covering almost 70% of the stadium.

It was not just their colors, their voices drowned those of Steel Dominion.

The advantage in terms of energy was already on Scarlet Rose's favor.

As for the Avatars who came out?

Crimson Saint and Chris came out to represent Scarlet Rose. In response, Steel Dominion's captain came out, a Blademaster controller.

The first clash started without much fanfare.

To Steel Dominion, it meant more though. The captain entered the first individual battle with only one goal in mind, to win.

If he could win the first individual battle, his club would have momentum, momentum that could become the catalyst that would push them all the way to topple the mighty Scarlet Rose.

Besides, like last season, this season's playoff would be employing the new points format, eliminating the possibility of a draw in the playoffs.

As soon as the battle started, Crimson Saint charged forward.

The Blademaster didn't cower, he also charged.

BAM!

It was a clash of the Bladewielders!

With his twin's words, the Blademaster was a mirage.

Behind his monitor?

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Steel Dominion's captain was a menace behind his monitor, causing a storm with the chaotic sound of his fingers hitting his keyboard.

Chris? Chris's finger movement and sound was rhythmic, as if they followed a musical pattern.

On the pitch? Crimson Saint fought with dominance.

From the beginning of the battle to the end, Crimson Saint dealt the first damage, blocking his opponent's high level skill with his shield, and from then on, Chris dictated the tempo of the game.

The Blademaster threatened to topple the Paladin multiple times, but solid as a rock, Chris blocked all the dangerous skills with frightening consistency.

The enemy captain approached the game with endless energy and passion, but Chris approached it with a relaxed, confident vibe.

To still dominate that way, he crushed his opponent psychologically.

And immediately after he won the psychological battle, his victory became set in stone. It was only a matter of time.

Crimson Saint won with 34% HP remaining.

Steel Dominion suffered a crushing blow in the first individual battle, a blow that hit their captain the most but he didn't let it affect his full team.

Within just a few seconds after losing to Chris, Henry, Steel Dominion's captain recovered and changed his strategy.

He changed his lineup for the remaining 2 individual battles, sending his 2 substitute players instead. He decided to preserve his team's freshness to go all in for the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

With that decision, the result of the remaining 2 individual battles became set in stone.

After the Individual Battle round, this was what the scorecard looked like.

[Scarlet Rose: 3 points]

[Steel Dominion: 0 point]

But then, one of the most epic 3 vs 3 battle rounds in the English Pro Alliance this season took place next as Steel Dominion erupted.

Inserting himself, his vice-captain who controlled a Battle Mage, and his Paladin into the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Steel Dominion made a stunning comeback.

Sheer willpower was what made it possible, and some tactical genius.

Since Chris already anchored the individual battle, Jonathan decided to give him some rest, deciding to anchoring the 3 vs 3 battle rush himself.

Jonathan went first, but he didn't go against Henry. Rather, he went against Steel Dominion's third player, the Paladin.

Sending a Paladin against one of the best Paladin players in the history of the English Pro Alliance was gutsy, but the result proved Henry's decision right.

Jonathan was supposed to be the shameless one with the grind playstyle, dealing little damage and dragging the battle out.

Well, guess what? Steel Dominion's captain decided to become the Grind King against The Grind King in the playoff 3 vs 3 battle rush.

Having prepared himself for it, as soon as the game started, his fingers erupted, flying through his keyboard in a mirage.

In that moment, his hand just rested on his mouse. He never moved it.

And so, his Avatar never moved.

He didn't charge, that was not his intention. Rather, he spent the first few seconds of the battle rooted in one spot, leaving Jonathan baffled.

But Jonathan was no longer baffled when he realized...

'It's an Awakened level skill, this f*cker!'

But it was too late.

(Divine Judgement=}

KABOOM!

Jonathan managed to defend himself from the brunt of the damage, but that one attack still took 13% of his HP.

And so, the enemy became a Grind King against The Grind King.

The Paladin focused on defense, running around the arena after successfully dealing damage with his first attack.

Jonathan chased his opponent down to no avail. The shameless bastard refused to fight him, content with just running around.

It was disgraceful, but it was an effective tactic.

Besides, it mirrored Jonathan's own infamous playstyle. That didn't stop him from trolling him in chat though.

But the guy never responded, fully focused on kiting his opponent.

Jonathan cursed. He cursed so much that he attracted a yellow card from the game supervisor, but then, the guy didn't get to use all the 20 minutes allocated to the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

He used 14 minutes, 27 seconds.

That was the time it took Jonathan to pin his opponent down.

The only reason why he succeeded was because, well, he was the original Grind King. He knew all the patterns and preferences required to play the style.

What took him so long was just how prepared his opponent was. He clearly studied hundreds of his games, learning his own preferences so much that he predicted some of his moves before he made them.

Jonathan cursed after finally killing his opponent with just 8% of his HP remaining, but inside, he felt solemn.

'These guys are prepared'.

Despite all that, Steel Dominion still lost the first clash. It didn't feel like a clash to Jonathan though.

These guys did their homework a bit too thoroughly.

Winning wouldn't be a walk over like he thought.

Steel Dominion sent their vice-captain as their second representative for the 3 vs 3 battle rush. Jonathan tried to kite his opponent but with just 8% of his HP remaining, he couldn't do much against the Battle Mage.

The Battle Mage won, and Scarlet Rose's 2nd representative in the 3 vs 3 battle rush entered the arena... Chris.

Immediately, the Combat Mage charged forward, his battle lance glowing in a bright azure color.

Chris reacted quickly this time.

Clearly, they wanted to use the same tactic that they used against his captain, using an Awakened level skill early on to take a chunk of his HP.

Chris managed to interrupt the skill activation, making the fight level.

In a level fight, he destroyed his opponent.

Chris had 37% of his HP remaining, but it was Steel Dominion's 3rd representative who turned the narrative around, Henry.

That night, Henry hit his peak.

He entered the flow state and presented his best performance all season.

Henry obliterated Chris with 33% HP, and with his remaining 67% HP, he completed a 2v1, destroying Scarlet Rose's final representative in the 3 vs 3 battle rush, leaving the Etihad Stadium stunned.

---<VICTORY>---

[Scarlet Rose: 3 points]

[Steel Dominion: 3 points]

"GRANDMA'S PIMPLES! What did we just witness?"

"Damn! Henry exploded!"

"That was a Supernova!"

"And Scarlet Rose and Steel Dominion are level 3-3, who saw this coming? No one!"

"Can Steel Dominion do it?"

"Can they actually do it?"

The answer was no.

In the team battle, Henry carried the same form from the 3 vs 3 battle rush but against such a team with the likes of Chris and Jonathan, including the rest of Scarlet Rose's core, they simply didn't have the quality to win.

Against Henry, Jonathan used an insidious battle strategy, dragging him down and committing suicide alongside him before the Blademaster could cause too much damage to his teammates.

By taking Henry down with him, Jonathan gave Scarlet Rose the edge.

That was all they needed.

Chris and Crimson Saint led the team to a dominant victory against Steel Dominion in the team battle, riding on the momentum bought by their captain's sacrifice.

The game ended in a Steel Dominion heartbreak.

---<VICTORY>---

[Scarlet Rose: 8 points]

[Steel Dominion: 3 points]

Scarlet Rose progressed, Steel Dominion were eliminated in their first outing of the playoff round.

It was a short but eventful journey for the players and their fanbase.

Chapter 235: Playoff Quarterfinal; Cyber Squad vs Juggernaut

The next day...

[Quarterfinal Two: Cyber Squad vs Juggernaut]

[Neutral Ground: Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, London]

[Format: Individual Battle Round – 3 vs 3 Battle Rush – Full Team Battle]

Yesterday, the first epic clash of the playoff quarterfinals took place, an exciting game that ended with the favorite winning... Scarlet Rose.

Yesterday, Steel Dominion were eliminated out of the playoffs.

Now, today, it was up to Juggernaut to challenge fate.

Could they do it?

Could they create the greatest underdog story of the season?

Only time would tell.

Hours later, 5:00pm, an hour before the time scheduled for the 2nd epic quarterfinal clash of the playoffs, the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium became filled to the brim with tens of thousands of Warstar fans who came to watch the show.

If yesterday's game was any indication, Juggernaut, who were ranked higher in the league than Steel Dominion were definitely not going to roll over their bellies for their superior opponents to get an easy win.

If Steel Dominion had it in them to push Scarlet Rose so much, then, Juggernaut surely had it in them to go even farther.

After all, they had a much more impressive league campaign than Steel Dominion. This hyped up the ticket sales price for the game, but still it wasn't enough to faze fans. Tens of thousands of fans booked the stadium down.

The atmosphere in the stadium was electric.

Cyber Squad's loyal fans, this time drenched in neon colors waved luminous banners, a specific banner bigger than all the others, and in it was Stinger of War, the Battle God seemingly going to war with his imperious battle lance.

In the banner, all his enemies were on the floor, cowering in fear and staring at him with horror-filled eyes.

An emblem was attached to the images of his enemies in the banner, and that banner belonged to Juggernaut.

Juggernaut's fans were not fazed by the taunting of their opponents. They were a stone-faced contingent wrapped in cold, screaming lethal precision.

They supported their team with a rhythmic, relentless hum of their voices.

A looming tension gripped the air.

The Warstar digital battlefield flickered to life atop the stadium field, warping it into a futuristic data grid overlaid with jagged, urban ruins.

The commentators were already hyped.

Eli Caster, the main commentator of the night started. "And just like we witnessed yesterday, tonight, two philosophies collide: Cyber Squad's tech-fueled aggression against Juggernaut's iron defense".

"Only one advances".

Vera Nacht, the assistant commentator chipped in. "And remember, the Juggernauts don't just play. They suffocate. No room to breath".

"This season, they've been the only club outside the top 4 to topple giants. Can they do it tonight again when it matters the most to their ambitious bid?"

"It won't be easy for Cyber Squad either".

"To win, Cyber will have to break the unbreakable".

The players walked into stage to loud fanfare, their fans cheering them on as they entered their respective playing booths, and then it started.

[LOADING...]

[FIRST ROUND: INDIVIDUAL BATTLE]

Just like predicted, the first individual battle of the game was between the 2 team's captains, Caster's Stinger of War vs Juggernaut's Stahlbund, a Paladin.

FIGHT!

As soon as the game started, Stinger of War opened strong, fully embodying Caster's fight style and philosophy as he rushed into close combat.

But even before he closed the distance, the Combat Mage already erupted with a deluge of ranged attacks, a rain of arcing plasma mines dancing around him, exploding in pixelated bursts as he used Stinger of War's Unique skill.

Stahlhund didn't flinch. The Paladin Avatar, plated in runic armor, looking valiant and unstoppable absorbed every hit with his shifting barrier shield.

But as soon as Stinger of War closed the distance, he became disadvantaged.

Paladins were good at close combat battles, but not as good as Combat Mages. That Avatar class was literally designed with battle and carnage in mind.

As soon as Caster caught his opponent in a skill combo, juggling him backwards, chaining one skill after the other seamlessly, it was over.

The last hit was the battle lance slamming into the Paladin's back from an awkward angle... a CRITICAL HIT.

Final move: Hammer Judgement.

Stinger of War crashed down like a meteor with his battle lance.

---<VICTORY>---

[Cyber Squad: 1 point]

[Juggernaut: 0 point]

Juggernaut was already losing, but even as Cyber Squad fans celebrated in the stadium stands, losing their minds, Juggernaut fans kept their composure.

It was eerie, almost as if like they knew the outcome of the game ahead of time. It didn't matter though, what mattered was what happened in the arena.

The second individual battle was between Isabella, Cyber Squad's vice-captain and Paladin, versus Juggernaut's Direwolf, an Ice Elementalist.

The 2nd battle was fast-paced, a dance of invisibility and mirrored steps, the Paladin bulldozing and at other times dancing through the haze of ice spells that the Elementalist spammed at her.

And once the opening showed, Isabelle struck like lightning, draining a chunk of his HP, but the Elementalist was not done yet as her summoned ice hounds swarmed and slowed her down.

But then Isabella used Green-White-Green, a Blademaster player-created skill with her Paladin, a flicker-step triple slash involving her long sword, her shield, then her long sword again to crush her opponent.

With it, she dealt tremendous damage, ending the Elementalist's life.

Once again, Cyber Squad won.

The third individual battle was between Cyber Squad's Blademaster and Juggernaut's Gunner.

It was close combat vs range.

The one better at bringing out the strengths of his class would win.

Well, Cyber Squad lost, for the first time.

And with that, the individual battle came to an end.

[Cyber Squad: 2 points]

[Juggernaut: 1 point]

And then, round 2... the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

Cyber Squad entered with a squad comprising Caster's Stinger of War, Isabella's Paladin, and their Elementalist.

As for Juggernaut? They entered with their captain's Paladin, the Gunner, and a Brawler.

Like expected, Caster went first but Juggernaut sent out their Brawler to counter him.

Stinger of War darted across the field with surgical precision, evading all the mid-range attack skills of the Brawler like sand toss and brick toss.

It was when he closed the distance that the true battle started.

Both Avatars clashed.

BOOM!

It was intense and bloodcurdling, one Avatar swinging his battle lance with lethal precision and skill, while the other went all in with brutal simplemindedness, swinging his fists wildly like a barbarian.

It was a far tighter duel than fans, and even Caster expected.

His opponent managed to push him all the way, eating a chunk of his HP along the line before dying.

Stinger of War won with only 15% HP remaining.

The next Juggernaut challenger was the enemy captain, Stahlhund. This was a mismatch. With the Paladin fresh at 100% and his enemy at just 15% HP, it was a mismatch.

Caster tried to channel his inner Jonathan, hoping to nick off some HP while stalling for time, but the Paladin stonewalled everything.

He ended Stinger of War with a single Heaven's Wall Slam, barely losing 20% HP in the process of taking down the enemy Paladin.

Stinger of War out. Stahlhund at 80% HP.

Cyber Squad sent out their Elementalist next. The elemental artist played wide, laying traps and terrifying AOE zones with his spells.

Stahlhund is methodical but the Paladin took damage over time. The Elementalist hit him with Thermal Overdrive Pulse, shaving off his barrier.

Just before dying, the Paladin unleashed a detonation sequence, activating an Awakened level Paladin skill in conjunction with his Unique Skill and sacrificing his remaining HP for temporary power to vaporize the Elementalist's last 15% HP.

Both died. Both were out, score tied.

For the final clash of the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Isabella, Cyber Squad's Paladin went up against the enemy's gunner.

It was intense, but Isabella came out on top, closing the distance after trying to no avail for minutes.

Once she managed to close the distance, the Gunner was cooked.

During those minutes while she struggled to close the distance, she survived because of her Paladin class, its high HP, few healing skills, and her shield.

The Gunner was beaten to death by the Paladin.

---<VICTORY>---

[Cyber Squad: 5 points]

[Juggernaut: 1 point]

Juggernaut had an uphill mountain to climb, if they wanted to win.

Well, the team battle was relatively short and straight to the point, both teams preferring an all-out battle royale to a game of too many tactics.

The arena transformed into a post-apocalyptic city map with tight alleys, high rooftops, and vertical chaos.

Juggernaut started in their classic Triangle Formation, shielding their Cleric. Cyber Squad went full spread, a V-Drift Assault, spreading thing to confuse focus fire, Stinger of War leading the way.

Early on, Juggernaut took the upper hand, their captain taking his brilliance of the 3 vs 3 battle rush to the team battle.

But Caster countered with sheer tenacity, skill, and his preparation.

He KO'ed his opponent despite the fact that he was already in the state of flow. Once they lost their captain, Juggernaut fumbled.

Clayton ran riot, tearing them apart.

By the end of the game, a lot of Juggernaut fans lost their composure, collapsing in tears as they watched their beloved club being ripped apart by the demons of London.

Cyber Squad won.

---<VICTORY>---

[Cyber Squad: 9 points]

[Juggernaut: 1 point]

It was a dominant 9-1 victory to Cyber Squad, sending their opponents home.

Eli Caster chipped in amid the Cyber Squad celebrations. "And Cyber Squad have done it, they've cracked the Juggernaut!"

"They've shattered the fortress!"

"Stinger of War was poetry tonight," Vera Nacht added. "What a match. What a WAR".

Chapter 236: Playoff Semifinal; Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion

[Quarterfinal One: Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion]

[Scarlet Rose: 8 points]

[Steel Dominion: 3 points]

...

[Quarterfinal Two: Cyber Squad vs Juggernaut]

[Cyber Squad: 9 points]

[Juggernaut: 1 point]

2 days of intense, exciting Warstar games, and at the end of it, 2 pro clubs progressed to the next round of the playoffs, while 2 clubs were eliminated.

After having one of their most impressive seasons in recent years, Juggernaut and Steel Dominion's journey ended in the first round of the playoffs.

And after playing a record-breaking campaign all season, Scarlet Rose and Cyber Squad took their success one step further, progressing to the semifinal of the playoffs.

With the conclusion of the quarterfinals, the draw of the semifinals was also concluded, giving Warstar fans the blockbuster matchups that they've been clamoring for since the playoffs started.

[Warstar RPG Playoffs:]

[Semifinal fixtures:]

[Semifinal One: Phoenix Rising vs Scarlet Rose]

[Semifinal Two: Echelon vs Cyber Squad]

This was not just any playoffs semifinal, it was a semifinal featuring the top 4 teams that have been involved in a rivalry all season.

It was a semifinal featuring the best 4 clubs this season.

It was also a semifinal with a lot of history.

Phoenix Rising vs Scarlet Rose was last season's Warstar RPG Champions League final all over again. It was a rematch of the epic match where Phoenix Rising got their 4th Warstar RPG Champions league trophy.

As for Echelon vs Cyber Squad, it was a game with a lot of history to both club's fanbases.

For Cyber Squad fans, they would be facing their OG Captain, God Noah in the first high-stakes game since giving him a befitting farewell in their stadium.

For Echelon fans, it was payback time for their captain.

Everyone knew of how Cyber Squad forced Noah and his friends into retirement. Now, Echelon fans wanted to rub it on their opponents faces, making them know just how big of a stupid decision they made.

All these reasons and more turned the semifinal into an all-time classic.

In the 4 days building up to the first epic semifinal clash, social media went haywire as fans of the English Pro Alliance discussed non-stop about the 2 potentially season-deciding games for the 4 clubs involved.

Time moved fast.

And like the rolling pages of a book, D-day was here.

It was a Tuesday evening in Old Trafford, Football Club Manchester United's home stadium. That was the venue for the first semifinal clash of the playoffs.

2 hours before the main event was to start, Old Trafford was already close to being filled to the brim as fans in Scarlet Rose's crimson and Phoenix Rising's yellow and dark green, being their colors this season took to the stadium.

Even before the main battle started, the fans were already battling among themselves as they held nothing back in the psychological warfare.

Phoenix Rising's fans paraded a gigantic banner of their captain's Avatar, Dain Ironvalor depicted as a giant, complete with his shield and longsword.

He towered before a second party, being team Scarlet Rose's Avatars. All 7 Avatars stared up at the gigantic Paladin, cowering in fear, horror evident in their eyes.

Their message was clear: their captain would destroy Scarlet Rose again.

Scarlet Rose fans?

Theirs was even more extreme. With Jonathan leading the wave on social media, riling them on, the fans in crimson took it a step further.

They unfurled banners filled with profanities and curse words, even going as far as depicting Phoenix Rising as a prostitute that their club was about to ravage.

It was crazy.

By the time the players entered the stadium around 6:00pm, the tension between both clubs was palpable, past history triggering bad blood between them.

Jonathan never wanted to win any game as much as he wanted to win today.

Gabriel? Alongside his teammates, he was calm, leading the bunch with stale, focused eyes after dozens of hours of training, and tactical drilling in preparation for tonight's clash.

After losing 10-0 against Echelon, Gabriel changed. The way he carried himself, the way he trained, the way he drilled his team, it all changed.

Everything was more serious in Phoenix Rising's club building after that humbling game.

In the end, he couldn't achieve his objective, snatching the league from Echelon's grasp.

And now, all his attention focused on the Warstar RPG Champions League.

To Gabriel, it was not a debate, winning was the only option.

'I must make it back to the Warstar World Cup!'

'I must get my revenge against Meng Yu Wa!'

If he could not even dominate his domestic league, he had no business challenging Meng Yu Wa. This was why Gabriel took his training extra serious now.

And finally, the moment of truth was here.

It started.

[LOADING...]

[FIRST ROUND: INDIVIDUAL BATTLE]

Gabriel came out first to represent his team for the individual battle round. Everyone expected Jonathan to come out to personally avenge his team's defeat last year in the final, but Jonathan didn't do that.

Instead, he sent Chris to go fight Gabriel.

Jonathan was not like Noah. He already accepted long ago that his APM was no longer as fast. He was declining, his fingers were getting old.

This was why he leaned even more on using his brain and shameless trash talking in recent years to win games.

Against this iteration of Gabriel though, he knew that it would not work.

Jonathan wanted to win, he wanted to win so bad, and that was why he didn't enter this game ignorant and arrogant. He did his research, and he knew; if he played against Gabriel today, he would lose.

Gabriel was in perfect shape, mentally and physically. That loss against Echelon truly pushed him to go beyond his limits.

This was why he sent Chris first. Only Chris could challenge Gabriel in this Scarlet Rose team.

Even at that, Jonathan knew the outcome of the battle already. He knew how motivated and hyped Gabriel was though he would not show it. He wanted Chris's youthful energy and skill to push Gabriel all the way, testing his limits, and leaving him fatigued at the end. It was part of his strategy.

Heck, it was the core of his strategy.

The battle started, and it followed the script that Jonathan wrote.

Dain Ironvalor was unstoppable.

There was no mistake in Gabriel's movements. Every move, every skill activation, everything he did was perfect and effortless, leaving no loopholes for his opponent to exploit.

Against any other opponent, he would have lost in a minute.

But warned extensively by his captain, Chris expected to play against a perfect opponent. And the only way to play a perfect opponent and not suffer a humiliating defeat is to be perfect yourself.

Chris played a perfect game.

But it was not enough.

The battle went on for 6 minutes, 18 seconds; 6 minutes of non-stop action, fast-paced, scintillating battle.

---<VICTORY>---

[Phoenix Rising: 1 point]

[Scarlet Rose: 0 point]

Chris lost, but at the end, he was left smiling behind his monitor.

This was because his mission was complete.

Chris played his best game all season against Gabriel tonight. And in so doing, he managed to push the enemy captain to his very limits.

Chris's fingers ached after that epic duel. No matter how good Gabriel was, and no matter how much experience he had, his fingers must be aching too.

Jonathan represented Scarlet Rose for the second individual battle and won against Phoenix Rising. Phoenix Rising won the final individual battle, leaving the overall clash tight and unpredictable.

[Phoenix Rising: 2 points]

[Scarlet Rose: 1 point]

The tension in the stadium was palpable.

For neutral fans, they felt like they were in heaven as the game provided one of the most epic clash all season to feast their eyes.

Phoenix Rising won the individual battle round, but it was close.

Jonathan's plan?

He wanted Gabriel to also play the 3 vs 3 battle rush. He even went as far as taunting his opponent to play him in the 3 vs 3 battle rush if he had the guts. But if there was something Gabriel learned after playing against God Noah and losing in such humiliating fashion, it was how to deal with rage-baiting.

Like Chris thought, yes, Gabriel's fingers ached after that epic individual battle. If he entered the 3 vs 3 battle rush, his presence may help his team win, but in the grand scheme of things, it was a stupid decision.

Gabriel ignored Jonathan's rage-bait, avoiding the 3 vs 3 battle rush, as he left the responsibility to his teammates, focusing on recovering before the most important team battle.

His teammates did a good job, but against an irked Jonathan and his team, they didn't manage to get the win.

Scarlet Rose won.

---<VICTORY>---

[Phoenix Rising: 2 points]

[Scarlet Rose: 4 points]

Scarlet Rose was leading now, but it was still tight.

Besides, it didn't matter. The team battle would decide this epic semifinal clash. They had the halftime break, and 10 minutes later, they were back.

The deciding team battle was about to start.

It was a game of history, training, and determination.

A game of aura for aura.

[LOADING...]