

Destiny 1751

Chapter 1751: The Old Veterans and the Hot Young Bloods

.....

"Final Round: Team Competition – Hien Workshop (Home) versus Emphyrean Talons (Away)!"

Hien Workshop:

-Starting Members:

Sky King Cielo (Maverick God)

Strong Lord Griff (Maverick God)

Young God Thirteenth Massacre (Godlike Player)

Twin Heavens: Faith and Grace (Peak Titled Rankers)

-Sixth Man:

Sung Jae (Unclassified Player)

Empyrean Talons:

-Starting Members:

Battle God Sickarius (Godlike Player)

War God Simba (Godlike Player)

Gentle Goddess Arielle (Godlike Player)

Elemental Goddess Charlotte (Godlike Player)

Dark Knight Owen (Peak Titled Ranker)

-Sixth Man:

Archer Queen Ithilien (Peak Titled Ranker)

...

Seeing the respective lineups of the two teams, the players could not help but heave a sigh of relief for not seeing too much strangeness from both sides, particularly the Empyrean Talons as they seemed to be a 'fan' of odd strategies.

At first glance, the lineup of the Empyrean Talons was quite intimidating, especially after seeing that almost all their starting members were Godlike Players.

Moreover, Owen was standing on the borderline between a Peak Titled Ranker and a true Godlike Player, making the lineup even more stunning.

But the lineup of the opposing side was something that could not be underestimated either, especially when they put Sky King and Strong Lord together.

A powerful marksman with scary precision and a top-class tank with almost impenetrable defense was a combination that could cause anyone a lot of trouble, especially when they were among the top and most experienced veterans in the game.

They were even stronger than most of the 'Old Gods' of the virtual world, who were from the previous Godly Ranking Lists.

Adding the young talents such as Thirteenth Massacre, who was also a Godlike Player, and the twin sisters, who could rival – or even surpass – a top-notch Support or Healer together, their lineup was quite solid as well.

What made everyone curious was the person who was acting as the sixth man of the team. Sending an unknown and unclassified player to such an important match was not only a mystery but an oddity as well.

Regardless, those who were watching this match still felt that there was a reason why Cielo had sent this person given his rich experience.

Whatever it was, the other experts watching the match felt that this was going to be interesting. They shared the thought that the Hien Workshop would most likely be revealing another trump card of their team, which was another talent that they had nurtured just like Thirteenth Massacre.

Shin, who appeared at a random spot alongside the others, was also having the same thought after seeing the names of the participants of this round.

He could tell that the opposing side was planning to catch them off guard by sending such an unknown factor for the Team Competition. But this did not change the plan that Shin had already drawn for this match.

He turned to the others and warned them. "We don't have any information about that guy, but this does not affect our plans that much."

"Let's proceed as per our strategy," he added before leading everyone toward a certain direction.

The group quickly gathered and formed a battle formation as they advanced on the battlefield.

Aside from Shin who separated himself from the group to scout the surroundings, the remaining four members of the team gathered and formed a rhombus-shaped formation.

Owen was positioned at the forefront of the group, firmly holding his shield and mace and fully prepared to respond to any situation.

Cloe and Alice were adjacent to each other and a few distance away from him. They were strategically positioned at a safe distance where they could both support Owen when they encountered any unexpected situation or retreat further away as soon as a hint of danger threatened them.

Meanwhile, Leonard was right behind the girls, guarding the rear. His job was to protect the two from any harm, particularly from any form of ambush, by relying on his 'Bestial Instincts' innate talent.

He was to respond to any unexpected situations that could risk the safety of these two, especially when they were the current core of this formation.

Shin was still bold enough to let the girls research combination spells and techniques, seemingly ignoring the fact that the two did not get along that well for obvious reasons.

Leonard was not sure if Shin was purposely ignoring it to let the two build enough trust and bond with one another or if he was just too ignorant about the reason for their 'grudges' with each other.

Regardless, the thought of these girls working perfectly together still convinced everyone, especially when they could become another trump card that the team could rely on in the future.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

While they were advancing, Shin gathered as much information as he could from the surroundings – recording all the things that he saw and getting familiar with the terrains of the map.

He was also taking note of the special places that could be an unexpected factor during the battle and looking out for any possible traps that could be used against them later.

While Shin was drawing a map of the entire battlefield, the 'home' team was steadily advancing with their great familiarity with the place.

"They are most likely to be sent to the eastern side of the map since we have spawned at the western side. But since it is random, we can't be sure if they are in the northeast or southeast part of the map, so we must be careful during our advance."

Cielo was giving out a series of instructions while leading the ground through the forest.

At the same time, he had summoned his Spirit Hawk to scout the place in the air, looking for the signs of their opposition from the sky.

The battlefield setting that they had chosen was a forest-type map but with a less dense environment. The trees were not that big, only enough to fill the forest, and varied from all kinds of sizes such as thin and slender ones up to thick and compact trunks.

The denseness of the forest was enough to make covers for stealthy movements, but also a little wide to see the other people if one was observant enough.

This was a perfect environment for someone like Cielo, who was an Elven Archer. With his superior eyesight and natural connection with the elemental mana, he was able to scout such places better than the others.

Unlike the traditional Hunting Archers, who took beast pets as their companions, Elven Archers were known for using spiritual beings as their partners.

These spiritual beings might be inferior to Elemental Spirits that the Transcendent Races had contracted, but they were still efficient enough for different situations due to their unique points.

Cielo had contacted a Spirit Hawk to be his aerial scout and a Spirit Wolf to scout on the ground.

These two spirit pets also possessed a high sensitivity of mana signatures, so they could perceive things that normal people could.

Nothing could easily escape their sharp senses.

With the help of these partners of his, he was able to 'see' further while advancing alongside the rest of his team.

He was slightly ahead of the others he was scouting the path just like Shin. But unlike the latter, who had to move a little slower due to his unfamiliarity with the map, Cielo was able to move freely and only focused on fighting their opponents.

A distance away, the rest of his group was advancing with the standard cross (+) formation, having a reasonable space away from one another.

Griff was at the forefront of the group followed by the twin sisters, who were standing opposite to each other. Then there was Thirteenth Massacre to guard the rear.

It was similar to the formation of the Empyrean Talons. The only differences were the positioning of their frontline and the space they had apart.

The Hien Workshop favored using the formation with equal space away from one another while the Empyrean Talons had a slightly complicated formation as Owen and Leonard were a little farther away from the girls as the two in the middle were somewhat close to one another.

At the same time, the scouts of the two sides were from different classes with different specialties.

Due to the nature of his class, Cielo was in a more favorable position. It was perfect for scouting the path ahead and spotting their opponents at a decent distance.

Meanwhile, Shin was an odd swordsman, who possessed a variety of stealth skills and techniques meant for assassins.

This did not include his elemental powers and magical techniques incorporated in swordsmanship.

Adding all the other factors together, Cielo was supposed to have some advantages against Shin in terms of scouting.

But if it was about sneaking to the backline, Shin had an overwhelming advantage given the variety of tricks that he possessed.

This was the reason why Cielo did not dare to scout too far from the group, making sure that he did not let the other party bypass him and ambush their backline to create chaos.

He was taking note of everything despite his fast advancement, not daring to overlook anything.

In the meantime, the people watching the match could not help but feel a little excited as they could see from their point of view that the two sides were about to meet one another.

The moment when the two sides crossed the slightly denser part of the map and the small hill respectively, both sides would spot their opposition within an instant.

When that happened, the main event would immediately erupt.

Chapter 1752: The Old Veterans and the Hot Young Bloods (Part 2)

.....

Cielo failed to find any sign of Shin as the latter moved discreetly through the forest, taking advantage of the vegetation to heighten his stealth abilities and further hide his tracks from the Spirit Hawk that was surveying the sky.

Shin, on the other hand, was able to instantly spot the Spirit Hawk in the sky from his hiding spot. He slightly frowned his brows when he saw the spiritual creature as he could tell that it was using some sort of ocular ability to survey the surroundings.

Through his True Sight, he was able to see that the creature was using the changes in the flow of mana within the air to see through anything. Its special ability seemed to be a direct counter to any hiding or stealth skills.

Recalling the data that they had about Cielo, Shin knew that there was another spiritual creature working together with this Spirit Hawk – the Spirit Wolf, which was scouting the land while the hawk was overseeing everything from above.

Shin quickly heightened his senses as he knew that there was a higher chance for that wolf to find him due to its powerful sense of scent.

He was just thinking about this when his scent was indeed picked up by the Spirit Wolf that was surveying the area near him.

Awoo~!

With a howl, the Spirit Wolf sprinted toward his direction, locking on his scent.

"Tsk!" Shin frowned as he did not expect that the Spirit Wolf would be able to spot him in an instant. He had also underestimated the sense of smell of this spiritual creature a little.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

He immediately made his move as he knew that even the Spirit Hawk had already locked on his mana signature and locked on presence from the air.

It would be a little troublesome once he got entangled with them as well as their master.

But he had just taken a couple of hops backward when a series of swooshing sounds came from a distance, attracting his attention.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Turning his head toward the source of the sounds, he saw a volley of arrows raining down from the sky and heading straight in his direction.

'Class Fighting Style: Arrow Rain'

Cielo did not shy away from taking the initiative as he quickly fired a series of shots, which was performed with his unique style of archery.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Each arrow was packed with a lot of force and enchanted with dense mana, making them explode right after coming in contact with something.

They continued to descend from the sky, leaving a series of holes in the ground as Shin tried his best to dodge them.

From what he could see, these mana-enchanted arrows seemed to have their own 'lives' as they tried to chase after him with extreme precision.

They were either being controlled remotely by his opponent or they had such a special feature that could be locked on his presence.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He continued to dodge while observing the Spirit Hawk in the air and the Spirit Wolf that was maintaining a decent distance away from him. He knew that these two spiritual creatures were helping Cielo accurately fire his shots at him.

They were constantly guiding their master where to fire his shots while the latter was continuously firing those arrows without holding back.

Cielo even applied a series of firing techniques to his shots, making them harder to dodge.

But his opponent was not an ordinary person either.

Shin just had to know where those arrows were coming from, and he would be able to avoid any of them with ease. He was even constantly taking notes of the surroundings, not forgetting his main purpose of scouting the area.

He was studying the surroundings and continued making the map during this skirmish.

"The hawk and wolf are a problem. I guess I must think of a way to somehow get rid of them to avoid any accidents later," thought Shin as he finished drawing the map of this area and familiarizing himself with the terrain.

But as he was thinking of whether to continue fighting Cielo and probe his abilities or retreat and regroup with the rest of the team, the opposing side seemed to have increased the rate of his shots and applied more advanced techniques in the process.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin was forced to change his route as Cielo 'blocked' his escape path with powerful shots.

He could tell that the other party was forcing him to stay in place and preventing him from reuniting with his team.

This sudden aggressiveness could only mean two things. The first case was because of Cielo getting near his location, giving him a clearer view of Shin without any help from his pets, while the other case was for his teammates arriving at the scene first.

The first case was meant to force Shin into a duel, betting on which side would arrive first, while the latter was to force Shin to stay and wait for the rest of Hien Workshop's members to trap him in an encirclement.

Either way, Shin would most likely be placed in some trouble as he knew that the opposing side had a decent advantage over him.

If Shin had to guess which of the two would most likely be the case, then he would choose the former.

Since Cielo was more familiar with the area, and he was an archer, he would be able to suppress Shin to a certain degree with his extreme precision and strong firepower.

At the same time, he could also trust his teammates to arrive at this place first due to the obvious advantage that they had when picking this map as their main battlefield.

The same could be said for the rest of the Hien Workshop's members. Since they would have a better understanding of the terrain, they could easily pick an easier path, which could directly help them reach the said location as soon as possible compared to the rest of the Empyrean Talons.

The obvious choice for this was the retreat and wait for Owen and the rest of the team to regroup and reorganize themselves.

But Shin had other thoughts. He preferred staying here as he and the team were already expecting something like this to happen.

He would confront Cielo head-on and force the latter to stay as well while waiting for his teammates to arrive.

Swoosh!

He suddenly adjusted his footwork as he suddenly spirited forward while intertwining sparks of black and white lightnings danced around his body, reinforcing his body and boosting his speed.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Movement Technique – Lighting Steps'

A series of afterimages were left behind as well as a trail of electric sparks were left behind as he continued to charge ahead and avoid the powerful arrows raining down from the sky.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Multiple explosions erupted behind Shin as he turned into a lightning ghost traversing the forest.

Seeing the sudden aggressiveness from his opponent, Cielo immediately noticed that something was wrong and quickly retreated while still firing his shots.

He was planning to kite Shin and lure the latter toward a place that was more favorable for him to fight.

He did not know why Shin chose to stay despite knowing his plans. He refused to believe that this guy, who was dubbed the Devil Strategist by many due to his vicious and devious plans and arrangements, would not see through his thoughts, which was the most obvious strategy when it came to these kinds of situations.

He knew that Shin must have arranged something for the rest of his team, which gave him the confidence to take on the challenge that Cielo was giving him.

Having his thoughts, he urged his team to increase their pace, afraid that it would be too late when they arrived.

...

Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the meantime, the rest of the Emyrean Talons immediately made their move right after receiving the report from Shin.

Cloe raised her staff as she cast some buffs that boosted everyone's stats, particularly their speeds, before proceeding.

Alice even added some wind-elemental enchantments to further increase their speed.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

But unlike the most common strategy where they were supposed to move as a group, Owen and Leonard broke free from the formation and started charging ahead at full speed and leaving the girls behind.

Given their current speed, they would reach the coordinates sent by Shin before the rest of their opposition.

Since they were not carrying any 'burdens', they could move faster and unrestrained, unlike the other side.

Moving in a group could be an issue as they had to maintain their formation while advancing. It was to prevent any accidents during that time that could threaten their Support and Healer.

Being isolated from the team could be extremely risky as a simple ambush from someone with a combat profession could put them in real danger. This was why the standard way was to move in a group while keeping their formation intact.

Shin used this thought as a weapon against an 'old-fashioned team' when giving his instructions earlier. He asked Owen and Leonard to leave the girls behind since moving individually was more advantageous than moving with a team.

The result was immediately revealed to the audience as they saw that the pair was about to reach the battlefield while the opposition was still quite far from it.

It would not take long for those two to reach where Shin and Cielo were fighting and trap the latter with a three-way formation.

This time, Cielo would be the one being caged between their formation while hoping for his team to save him.

But this old veteran was not someone to be underestimated either as he immediately sensed the danger right after Shin changed the pace of the battle.

Cielo ordered his Spirit Hawk to fly higher and command it to head over the small hill in the distance where they had spotted Shin.

That was when he saw Owen and Leonard rapidly climbing up the hill and rushing toward the battlefield.

Seeing this, Cielo immediately showed his vast experience as he made some adjustments to their plan. He ordered Griff to also break free from their formation, informing the latter about the sudden development.

As a veteran himself, Griff immediately moved according to the instructions while telling Thirteenth Massacre to take over his position of protecting the twin sisters.

He then asked the girls to give him some buffs that could enhance his speed so that he would not be too behind Owen and Leonard, who were already reaching the battlefield.

Swoosh!

"Hmm!?" Shin also realized that Cielo had adjusted their formation after seeing the Spirit Hawk change its direction.

Thinking about this, he suddenly stopped chasing after the Sky King headed toward the direction where Griff was coming from, planning to intercept the latter.

"Leo, go chase the old man and keep him busy. Owen, come with me and greet the new guest," he instructed as he ditched Cielo without any hesitation and sprinted in another direction.

"What!?" Cielo was also taken aback by Shin's decisiveness, making him shake his head a little. "This kid sure knows how to read the battlefield and snatch the tempo."

He was about to give chase when a commotion suddenly attracted his attention.

Roar!

A deafening roar suddenly erupted from the distance.

Then Leonard, who just fused with Lycan under his Elemental Spirit Possession, appeared at the top of the small hill and was seen charging at Cielo with extreme speed.

His mobility was not least affected despite the instant burst of speed that he had. This made him look like the king of the jungle running through any obstacles on his path.

Given his speed, it would only require him a half or a full minute before he could reach Cielo, forcing the latter to abandon the thought of bothering Shin.

"Young Blood sure are scary," mumbled the Sky King as he smiled bitterly. "But if you think that we are already washed out by the time, then you are truly mistaken."

Nocking a Mana-Enchanted Arrow on his bow, he prepared himself for a serious battle after a long time. "This is going to be interesting."

Chapter 1753: The Thrill of Team Competition

.....

The secret exchanges between Shin and Cielo during the shifts in their strategy were only seen by a few people.

Those adjustments might be brief and small, but the impact that they had in the battle was quite huge.

They showed how scary hot young blood, who was not afraid of innovation of strategies, and the vast experience of an old veteran when responding to these unexpected developments.

Regardless, the battle had just started, which meant that more of these could happen later as the clash between the two sides further developed.

...

Seeing that Owen was charging at him and Shin was flanking him from a different direction, Griff wanted to change his direction and move toward Cielo, wanting to regroup with his captain and work together to fight the three.

But after a brief consideration, he abandoned the idea, especially after seeing how quickly Shin responded to the changes on the battlefield.

He was afraid that if he left this spot, Shin would change his plan once again and head straight to the three behind him, who were still running toward this place.

Even if he trusted those youngsters, he still had to consider how scary Shin and Owen could be given the classes that they had.

Owen was more than enough to handle Thirteenth Massacre while Shin was slaughtering the girls by himself.

Once Griff left this post, a terrible disaster would befall the other three.

He had already seen a glimpse of what Shin could do when it came to his decision-making, so Griff did not dare to take the risk for the overall result of this battle.

Having that thought in mind, he braced himself and got ready to engage in an intense battle against Shin and Owen. He was confident that he would be able to hold his ground until the three arrived and came to rescue him later.

Bang!

Taking a powerful stomp, he firmly planted his feet as he got ready for an intense collision against the incoming pair of the opposing side.

Swoosh!

Seeing this, Shin increased his speed, overtaking Owen's speed and leaping into the air while taking his signature sword-drawing stance midair.

Shing!

After accumulating a large amount of Primordial Lightning into his sword, he suddenly unsheathed the [Yamato] and swiftly swung it forward to release all those energies.

Roar!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Lightning) – Eclipse Dragon Draw'

Swoosh!

A huge energy beam was released by that swing and formed a huge lightning dragon that coiled and danced in the air before flying straight to Griff, who was standing in the distance.

Familiar with the might of this skill, Griff did not dare to underestimate his opponent and raised his shield high, summoning a huge wall of energy that resembled a small fortress.

Boom!

The energy wall was also filled with glowing runes that further reinforced its defensive properties as it welcomed the incoming attack from Shin.

Boom!

The wall shook violently and showed a series of huge cracks almost immediately. It was only able to withstand the attack for almost a couple of seconds before collapsing completely.

Bang!

But that was enough to nullify almost all the impact from that attack, exhausting all its remaining powers.

The residual energy that remained from that attack was not enough to put any threat to him given the powerful defense that he possessed.

Swoosh!

But right at the same time, Owen's figure suddenly broke through the receding energy curtain created by the previous collision.

Owen, covered in golden light, crashed against Griff, who was barely able to raise his shield upon collision.

Boom!

The Strong Lord was sent flying by the powerful impact and by being caught off guard by the unexpected attack that came a little too perfectly.

Owen was about to give chase when he noticed something strange underneath his feet. When he glanced at it, he saw an activated magic circle underneath his feet.

"So, that stomp is not only just for stabilizing his stance but to set up a trap as well," he mumbled as he activated his 'Divine Avatar' Mana Manipulation Technique to the fullest.

Boom!

A sacred light suddenly erupted from the magic circle and trapped Owen inside a transparent coffin that prevented him from going anywhere.

This forced Owen to use one of his CC-Removing Skills to free himself before swiftly giving chase.

Bang!

In the meantime, Shin had already caught up to Griff, engaging in an intense battle against the latter. He was preventing this old veteran from having full control over the rhythm of the battle, which would buy him enough time for the rest of the Hien Workshop to arrive.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of clashes immediately erupted, causing the wind to ripple violently. They had also blasted the surrounding terrains in their wake, somewhat changing the surroundings.

Swoosh!

During the intense clashes with Shin, Griff was forced to retreat as he saw Owen freeing himself from the 'Holy Prison' and charging straight at him.

He knew that he could not afford to face both Shin and Owen at the same time as it could spell a great disaster for him.

His job was to buy as much time as possible and keep himself alive until the reinforcements arrived. He did not have to engage in serious clashes with Shin and Owen since he would only be putting himself in a difficult position when it happened.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shin could not help but be a little impressed at this old veteran as he was able to keep a decent distance between Owen and himself during the most recent collisions.

This Strong Lord truly lived up to his name, showcasing to everyone that his reputation for defensive stance was not unfounded.

Shin and Owen were trying to build a great connection with one another and trying to link their movements to trap Griff in their tight coordination. But the latter always finds a way to cut off their connection by positioning himself in spots where he could disrupt their coordinated flow.

It was as if Griff was able to find the 'thread' connecting between Shin and Owen, which was barely forming, before cutting it with his tricky positioning.

This was the first time Shin had seen something like this, which gave him such a deep impression.

Meanwhile, Owen was amazed at this senior, who seemed to be 'teaching' him how to act as a real tank.

Naturally, Strong Lord Griff had also sacrificed some things in exchange for his interference between Shin and Owen. His health bar was steadily dropping despite his powerful defense and strong techniques.

Regardless, he had brought himself enough time with all of these. When his health bar was just about to hit a fourth of its total value, a sacred light suddenly fell on his body, returning it to its most healthy state.

Swoosh!

The rest of the Hien Workshop was the first to arrive!

Swoosh!

Young God Thirteenth Massacre broke free from the formation and sent a series of sword waves that hindered Owen from pushing Griff into a corner, saving their tank from a dangerous predicament.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As Owen blocked the sword waves, Shin suddenly charged his focus and charged straight at the three newcomers, planning to wreak havoc at their backline or even kill someone in the process.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

But he had just taken a step when Griff suddenly switched his gears, turning from a passive position into a more aggressive one.

Bang!

He started exchanging blows with Shin, knowing that he now had the timely assistance of his teammates.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

During the exchanges, Shin realized that he was being bombarded by a series of debuffs from Faith, who was a Dark Heretic (Dark Priest).

His movements were getting more difficult and heavier due to the number of negative statuses that were thrown at him.

Seeing this, he swiftly flipped the sheath in his left hand, transforming it into a rapier.

'Legacy Skill: Mond's Style – Conviction Form'

Taking advantage of the special effect of this form that removed all the debuffs at him upon the immediate activation, Shin swiftly retreated while signaling Owen to disengage in battle.

But how can the opposing side let them escape now that they were trapped in their formation?

Griff, with his rich experience, gave a series of commands as he temporarily took over the commanding position as their team captain was currently busy dealing with Leonard in the distance.

"Formation C. Little Thirteen, Northwest direction."

His simple words were immediately followed by the rest of the time, responding accordingly.

Thirteenth Massacre swiftly charged out of the formation, seemingly planning to launch a flank while the twin sisters moved along Griff while maintaining a decent stance that was neither too near nor too far.

Seeing the changes in the formation of the opposing side, Shin glanced at the mini-map from the corner of his eyes before giving out an order. "Fortress, Go!"

Receiving the signal, Owen suddenly stopped retreating as the round shield that he was holding turned into a rectangular one before slamming it into the ground.

Bang!

A towering wall suddenly blocked the vision of the opposing side aside from Thirteenth Massacre, which was taking a detour.

The Young God saw Alice cast a series of Blinks from the distance to arrive at the battlefield ahead of time and join the battle.

She was hiding behind Owen's towering while casting one of her signature Magical Techniques.

Griff was about to advance while maintaining the formation along with the girls behind him, but he was immediately stopped by Thirteenth Massacre, who could see the trap. "Sir Griff, stop!"

Fortunately, Griff also sensed the danger coming from behind the towering wall, which was why he was able to quickly stop himself from going further and raised his shield to cast a defensive skill in advance.

Roar!

It was at that moment when a group of elemental dragons rushed out from behind Owen's wall and charged at the opposing group.

'Legendary Magical Technique: Elemental Dragon Dance'

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Griff was immediately bombarded by the attacks of the elemental dragons, which were strong enough to almost take him down.

Fortunately, Faith and Grace were fast enough to cast a series of buffs and heals to restore his health to full before the damage could even turn serious.

The Strong Lord was still showcasing his strong defensive capabilities when Shin suddenly sneaked past him and headed straight for the twin sisters providing support from behind.

When Thirteenth Massacre saw this, he wanted to do the same, planning to attack Cloe, who was surely alone and still rushing toward the battlefield.

But after seeing Owen and Alice's timely retreat, he knew that it was already too late to do it due to his slight hesitation.

His lack of confidence had caused him to miss a precious chance that could possibly give them the upper hand in the battle.

But he did not dwell too long on this thought either as he swiftly retreated and used his wind-rider skill to boost his speed further and return to the side of the girls in time and before Shin could even arrive.

Bang!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

A series of clashes immediately took place as the two sides faced one another.

But Shin did not linger too much when he realized that it was too risky to continue. Griff was already returning after warding off the attack from Alice.

He pursed his lips a little as he swiftly entered stealth and immediately retreated.

This 'void' in battle gave the audience the time to catch their breaths after experiencing the intense clashes and fast changes on the battlefield. They were so caught up in the match that they had almost forgotten to breathe.

They were all at the edge of their seats the entire time and not daring to blink as they were too afraid to miss something important.

This brief pause also let everything sink into everyone's minds, processing all of it simultaneously.

Then they had instantly erupted in an intense uproar, seeing that the two sides retreated and chose to regroup with their team.

Chapter 1754: The Thrill of Team Competition (Part 2)

...

Right after retreating, Shin debated whether to continue pursuing Cielo, who was still engaged in an intense battle against Leonard and somewhat isolated away from the rest of the Hien Workshop.

But after considering it for a moment and receiving the report from Leonard that Cielo had lured him into a place with very complicated terrain, Shin decided to abandon that idea and summoned Leonard to regroup with them.

"Dealing with those old uncles sure is tricky," said Shin after the team regrouped right behind the small hill, slightly hiding from the eyes of their opponents.

Leonard chuckled as he just arrived. "This is also my first time facing an old veteran of their caliber in a team battle."

Cloe rolled her eyes as she refused. "That is because you have always been a solo player."

"So, how are we going to proceed?" asked Owen as he checked on his equipment.

Alice remained quiet as she tried to recall the formation of the opposing side and think of a way to break the defenses of their main tank.

Shin thought for a moment before saying. "That old dude Cielo is quite tricky. He can change the flow of the battle once he has gotten involved in their formation. He can also suppress Alice and Cloe from the distance due to his range advantage."

He paused briefly as he considered some scenarios inside his head before continuing. "We will proceed with breaking their formation forcefully. I will find a way to ambush their backline and force Cielo into an isolated battle while you guys deal with the rest."

Trying to fight the opposing side in a straight-up team battle would be a little tricky due to Cielo's presence, who could harass them from such a long distance, especially after Shin had the initial assessment of the latter's strength, which was quite decent.

Then there was also Griff, who had very solid defenses, which would be further strengthened due to the presence of their dual Support/Healer composition.

It would be a little easier if they had a thief or an assassin who could harass their backline to further weaken their formation. With this thought, Shin decided to take on that role given his unique abilities.

"Let's go," he signaled everyone after making sure that they had already adjusted themselves and prepared for another round.

...

The members of the Hien Workshop were also finding it a little tricky to deal with the members of the Empyrean Talons, especially after witnessing their top-notch abilities in action.

Their individual strength was already plenty to deal with, so they had to be extra careful during the battle. Adding the craftiness of Shin when doing his arrangements and orchestrating the flow of the battle, dealing with them became extra difficult.

If not for Griff and Cielo's presence to nullify most of the pressure with their calm composure and rich experience to respond to every move of their opponents, then they would have most likely suffered from the constant changes on the battlefield.

"We will be proceeding with Formation D and hold our positions for as long as we can to gather as much data as possible. We must grasp their strengths and abilities for as much as we can so that we can give Little Thirteen and Sung Jae enough time to 'process' everything with their unique talents."

"But this is going to be a battle of time," he added with a solemn tone before adding. "We can't be too complacent with our plan. That Battle God, who is also the Demon Strategist, is much harder to deal with than we have expected."

"It will not take that long before he realizes our plan."

"But the trickiest part is whether we can hold out that long from the combined assault of a group of such monstrous players until our 'team's engines' took off."

As the solemn mood enveloped the trio of younger players, Cielo chuckled as he quickly added. "But don't put too much pressure on yourselves. Losing this match is not much of a big deal. You three are still out of your growth pace, especially Little Thirteen. There is still a long road ahead of you."

"Don't rush things too quickly, or else you will feel burnout. Just enjoy the process and take this battle as a new learning experience."

"This will not be your last time facing them, so learning as much as you can about them will never hurt."

"Moreover, it is not like we will be kicked out of the tournament after losing. There is still the 'away' match after this and the lower bracket if we are unlucky."

"We still have plenty of 'second chances' along the way," he added, instantly erasing the pressure that the three were carrying, particularly Thirteenth Massacre, who was of the same generation as Shin and the other top-notch young gods of the virtual world.

...

Swoosh!

Shin could be seen traversing the space between the Empyrean Talons and Hien Workshop, sprinting straight to them with the Five Elemental Primordial Lightning dancing around his body.

Crackle! Crackle!

He left a trail of electric arcs on his path as he charged straight to the opposing side.

Swoosh!

He then accelerated and leaped into the air before unsheathing and swinging the [Yamato], which was under the 'Chaos Slasher Possession', forward.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Eclipse Tiger Draw'

Roar!

A huge tiger made of lightning energy flew out of the sword and pounced at the opposing group standing before it with its wide-open jaws.

Seeing the familiar pattern, Griff fixed his stance as he raised his shield and summoned a huge wall of energy that blocked the incoming attack.

'Class Fighting Style: Might of the Defender'

Boom!

The explosion destroyed the wall, but the attack from the opposing side stopped completely, turning it into a scattered energy dissipating in the air.

But despite all of that, Griff quickly took a step back and firmly planted his feet into the ground as he expected either Owen or Leonard to rush out of the receding veil of chaotic wind and energy before him.

It was what had happened earlier, so he was expecting the same thing to happen, which would try to break his stance and attack their backline.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But what came after that attack was a series of cutting sounds in the air, splitting the veil of chaotic energy before him and flying straight in his direction.

'Slayer Skill: (Reinforced) Crescent Cleave'

Five huge vertical crescents appeared before Griff, advancing in a fan-shaped manner, while carrying an intense coldness in them.

Griff was slightly caught off guard, but still able to respond in time. He was an old veteran with a lot of experience, after all.

'Knight Skill: (Enhanced) Shield Wall'

Another wall of energy was erected before him as the five vertical crescents classed against it, bombarding him with cold waves.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Swoosh!

It was only at that moment that Owen charged out of the chaotic coldness and rammed his shield at the collapsing wall, sending Griff striding backward.

'Knight Basic Skill: Shield Charge'

Bang!

Griff might have been caught off guard by this 'ambush' as well, but it was still not enough to throw off his stance as he was somewhat expecting something like this to happen.

Given how crafty Shin was it was not impossible for him to make a few adjustments with such attack patterns.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

But as he was getting into a stance, five elemental dragons suddenly emerged behind Owen and flew past the knight while charging straight at him.

It was Alice's signature Elemental Dragon Dance!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

But before the jaws of those dragons could even reach Griff, a series of shots came flying behind him and shot those elemental dragons down with their powerful explosions.

Swoosh!

A thick cloud of smoke veiled the air, somewhat obstructing the vision of everyone. Seeing this familiar pattern, the members of Hien Workshop prepared themselves for another ambush.

Faith and Grace, these Twin Heavens, suddenly summoned an energy membrane with their combined spell that enveloped everyone after healing Griff back to healthy state.

Thirteenth Massacre took a defensive stance while sharply scanning the surroundings while Cielo activated his shared vision with the Spirit Hawk that was flying in the sky.

It was at that moment that he saw Leonard hovering in the air for a couple of seconds before suddenly came crashing down toward the ground where they were located.

"Brace for some impact!" warned Cielo after seeing Leonard fall from the sky like a descending meteor.

Swoosh!

There was a huge hole in the cloud of smoke Leonard pierced through it and came crushing at the energy membrane that the twin sisters had summoned.

Boom!

The membrane shook violently as Leonard swung his war axes at it, creating a series of cracks that spread in every direction.

Thirteenth Massacre then leaped into the air, planning to clash against Leonard after receiving a series of buffs from the twin sisters.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After a series of collisions in the air, Leonard and Thirteenth Massacre separated from each other while warding off the arrows and magic spells that were respectively trying to shoot them down.

Griff was busy clashing against Owen, who was aggressively trying to bypass him along with the buffs provided by Cloe when he suddenly realized something.

"Sickarius is missing!" he warned the rest of his teammates, alerting them about the hidden threat lurking in the air.

It was at this moment when Cielo suddenly shifted his attention and started firing toward a certain spot near the twin sisters.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

His precise and powerful shots had forced Shin out of stealth, revealing his figure to everyone.

Regardless, he continued charging at Faith and Grace, who were now vulnerable to him. Even if they were being guarded by a pair of Spirit Wolves summoned by Cielo, they were barely able to stop him from advancing at the twin sisters.

Seeing this, Cielo gritted his teeth as he activated a skill that let him swap places with one of the Spirit Wolves, putting himself a few distances before Shin.

He raised his bow alongside the nocked arrow, aiming Shin at almost point-blank range.

He then released the arrow almost at the same time, letting the string push it forward and sending a powerful shot at the incoming opponent.

Twang!

'Extreme Archery: Power Shot'

Swoosh!

Wind gathered at the spinning arrow and formed a spiral gust during its flight. It left a violent trail behind as it continued to approach the target with all its might.

Shin was slightly surprised at the speed and power behind this shot, forcing him to stop while transforming the sheath in his left hand into the 'Judgement Form' and letting Astaroth possess it.

He then placed the greatsword before him, using its surface to block the incoming shot and activating defensive technique at the same time.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Defensive Mountain'

Boom!

Despite blocking the shot perfectly and applying a series of Sword Principles in the process such as Heavy Sword, Defensive Sword, and such to enhance the defensive properties of his technique, he was still pushed back by the spinning arrow due to its powerful might.

He had even left deep trails on the ground with his feet, signifying how powerful that shot was.

Cielo was about to heave a sigh of relief after warding off such a dangerous predicament when an ominous feeling suddenly overwhelmed him.

It was at that moment when he saw the [Yamato] flipping and twirling nearby, making him shout at the twin sisters right before him. "Run!"

Without any hesitation, Faith and Grace raised their staffs and teleported themselves rather strategically. They placed themselves in the spot between Griff and Thirteenth Massacre, who swiftly adjusted their positioning to act as their shield and sword right after they appeared.

Meanwhile, Cielo was forced to retreat further away from the group due to the tricky positioning of the sword suspended in the air near him.

Swoosh!

At that moment, Shin activated the 'Shadow Mark' Elemental Skill, appearing right beside the sword as he stretched his hand and grabbed it.

"Tsk!"

He could not help but click his tongue a little as it was a perfect opportunity to deal a serious blow to the opposing side. He did not expect that Cielo would be able to notice it in an instant while the twin sisters heeded his call without any hint of hesitation.

Regardless, he had already achieved his goal of separating Cielo from the rest, letting him proceed with the plan.

Cielo had also realized this and could not help but smile bitterly. "These guys sure are fond of using the box-and-one method."

But he still welcomed such a challenge from this young talent of the current generation.

Chapter 1755: Match Concluded!

...

Box-and-one – it was a common strategy used by different teams when dealing with powerhouses in team competitions. It was usually used to isolate a member of the opposing team with the most influence in the battle.

Most of the time, it was being used on the key players of the opposing team, just like the Aces, Commanders, or other key figures that had the largest impact on the flow of the battle.

Most of the time, a team would be sending a skilled person to restrict the actions of the specific target, preventing them from contributing to the team as much as possible. This would then lead to disharmony for the opposing team or at least weaken their strengths to the lowest level.

This specific method had also given birth to a series of variations like Box-2, where one of the team had to send one of their members to suppress a specific member of the opposing side, since a single person was not enough.

There was also the reverse-box, which required the key figure of the team to hold off four of the opposing members while the rest of the team dealt with the opposing key figure.

A lot of team strategies were birth from this specific method, which was why it became one of the foundation strategies in team competitions.

It was simple, but very effective most of the time.

But at the same time, the box-and-one method had also given birth to a series of strategies that were meant to counter it.

Thus, it became one of the father strategies within the virtual world, particularly in team competition.

...

Unfortunately for Hien Workshop, their current composition did not let them find any counter to the box-and-one method.

Cielo had already expected something like this to happen, but he knew that they could not do anything much against it, especially with the composition that they had.

It would be a little different if they had another veteran of the same caliber to hold the fort aside from Griff and himself.

Unfortunately, they did not have anyone to fill that role due to them being sent in the previous rounds.

They might have quite a lot of experts in the workshop, specifically nurtured by them. But producing someone of the same caliber as these legendary veterans was a whole different matter.

Even if they were a huge gaming workshop with a solid foundation, they were still far inferior compared to the hegemony of the virtual world, especially when it came to producing talent.

This was why the workshop was focusing all their efforts on their young talents, such as Thirteenth Massacre and Sung Jae, as well as Faith and Grace.

The current United Cup, which was filled and blooming with top-notch talents, was the perfect stepping stone for them to let them learn more about the current 'hierarchy' of the game.

Setting this thought aside, Cielo glanced at these young talents of the Empyrean Talons as he retreated before turning to Thirteenth Massacre and the twin sisters.

Then a dreamy and hopeful look flashed in his eyes before he raised his bow and aimed forward. "This generation sure is heavenly. I wonder who would be the leaders that would lead this 'charge'."

As he mumbled those words, he could not help but recall a certain group of players that not only shook the entire virtual world decades ago but also opened a new path for everyone in the real world.

"Irregulars. I wonder if another batch will appear this era," he mumbled to himself as he fired a series of shots at Shin, seemingly inviting the latter for a duel.

Twang!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the tricky trajectory of the incoming arrows, Shin suddenly shifted his center of gravity and irregularly swayed his body left and right.

A moment later, he suddenly sprinted forward while dodging the hail of arrows. He even left a series of afterimages behind as he advanced.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then an intense chase immediately followed, making these two exchange a series of skills and techniques in the process while getting further away from the main battlefield.

Cielo had started showing his top-notch kiting abilities while Shin had responded with every move his opponent an equally stunning and flashy techniques.

Cielo commanded the elemental powers of Unfettered Wind and Stunning Metal, combining the two with his techniques.

He had also started summoning his other spiritual creatures aside from the Spirit Hawk and Spirit Wolf – an Elemental Snake and Spiritual Treant were added in the battle.

They had formed a perfect battle formation that attempted to trap Shin while complementing their powers.

Shin, on the other hand, started showcasing his signature techniques such as the 'Infinity Edge' and 'Everchanging Sword Styles'. He did not hold back as he started to pressure his opponent despite being outnumbered.

There were even some instances where he had almost caught up to Cielo and attempted to end the latter.

Unfortunately, the Sky King still lived up to his reputation, not giving Shin enough opportunities that he could take advantage of.

The battle between these two attracted quite a lot of attention. But despite how stunning and flashy their exchanges were, they were still slightly inferior to the chaos happening on the other side of the battlefield.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

While Shin and Cielo were having a cat-and-mouse battle, the rest of the Empyrean Talons and Hien Workshop had engaged in a very intense and chaotic battle.

It felt like a free-for-all at first glance due to how chaotic the battlefield was.

Leonard and Owen kept on switching their positions as they tried to break through the defenses of their opposition and charged the twin sisters at the rear.

But in response to their ever-changing tempo, Griff had led the formation of the Hien Workshop, matching the chaos that their opposition was making.

Griff kept on swapping places with Thirteenth Massacre whenever the latter was pushed by Leonard into a corner.

In terms of technique, Thirteenth Massacre did not lose much, especially when the swordsman class focused on this style.

But it was inferior to the destructiveness that the berserker possessed, especially when the said person was Leonard, who was known for his destructive powers and overwhelming strength.

With Leonard's raw power and straightforward attack, Thirteenth Massacre found it a little difficult to maintain his stance, especially when the opposing side was bombarding him with rapid and consecutive strikes.

He had never found a good time to catch his breath during the exchanges, making it hard for him to keep up with Leonard.

The matchup was too bad for him.

Fortunately, the twin sisters behind were giving him timely assistance whenever he found himself in such a predicament.

Moreover, Griff was always there to cover him if he could not withstand the barrage that Leonard was throwing at him, giving him enough time to recover.

But when he was facing Owen, Thirteenth Massacre found it a little tolerable as their strengths were somewhat matched with one another.

With this, the balance was somewhat restored to a certain extent.

But there was still another that they needed to take care of. Alice's bombardment of spells was starting to get painful despite the combined forces of Faith and Grace.

The firepower that the side of the Empyrean Talons was starting to take a toll on them.

Cloe alone was more than enough to match the healing and assistance that the Twin Heavens were providing, so Alice was too loose to do anything she wanted on the battlefield.

It felt like the Empyrean Talons had an extra member in their ranks due to the gap in skills.

Cielo was supposed to suppress those two, interrupting them from time to time. But due to the box-and-one method that the Empyrean Talons were using, their initial plans became useless.

But despite the predicament that they were facing, the members of the Hien Workshop never backed down and continued to hold their ground.

When the pressure on the back of the three younger players was lifted by Cielo's words earlier, they started to perform much better than they had expected.

They started showcasing their true capabilities despite being at an obvious disadvantage.

The overwhelming gap was present, but they ignored it and continued doing what they could, helping Griff, who was carrying all the pressure on his back.

Even Thirteenth Massacre, who was performing poorly, started to showcase his real capabilities, which earned him his current title.

He started to enjoy the process, making his performance even better. He was even suppressing Owen to a certain extent due to this.

But that was also under the condition that Owen was not showing his real capabilities yet, not activating his Racial Trait, and not using his Divine Tattoo.

The battle started to become even more chaotic at this point, yet also became more entertaining in the eyes of the audience.

It was still obvious that the Empyrean Talons was a cut above the Hien Workshop, but the latter was still holding their ground quite well, earning them some cheers from the audience.

Unfortunately, not all underdog stories ended up well. It did not take long for the Hien Workshop to show a gap that led to a disaster.

A hole in their defenses caused Faith to die under the bombardment of Alice's spells and Leonard's unexpected assault.

The Hien Workshop tried to salvage the situation with a trade, but Thirteenth Massacre was not enough to suppress Alice and Cloe, who were top Godlike Players themselves.

This forced the Hien Workshop to retreat and regroup with Sung Jae, who immediately rushed toward the battlefield as soon as he was summoned in the field.

He was a sniper who possessed a top-notch precision that rivaled - or even surpassed - his mentor's, Sky King Cielo.

With his appearance, the tides of the battle slightly returned to an even state.

With Sung Jae's constant harassment, Alice and Cloe were no longer free to cast their spells, making it easier for the team to fight.

But it was at that moment when Owen had revealed his real capabilities, shocking everyone. An extremely mobile knight was an absolute menace for the members of the Hien Workshop to handle.

There was also Leonard, who had finally showcased the real might of the War God.

He activated the Elemental Possession, boosting all his stats. His strength overwhelmed Griff, who was forced to reveal his trump cards as well.

With an even more chaotic battlefield, Sung Jae was unable to keep up with the pace, costing him a series of mistakes.

The battle was decided when Shin returned after defeating Cielo.

This team competition might not be one of the legendary battles, but it was still one of the most intense clashes in the competition.

The live audience and online viewers took some time to recover themselves and only recovered after seeing the announcement of the system.

"Final Round: Team Competition – Hien Workshop (Home) versus Emphyrean Talons (Away)"

Result: Emphyrean Talons' Victory!

Final Score: 0.5 – 9.5!

Final Result: Emphyrean Talons – Victory!

Chapter 1756: Crazy Emphyrean Talons

...

The victory of the Empyrean Talons over the Hien Workshop did not cause too much commotion, as it was something that many had expected. After all, the former had an overpowered lineup filled with superstars.

But what made everyone shock was the almost one-sided victory that the Empyrean Talons had achieved.

The 9.5 to 0.5 score might not be perfect, but this result was still overwhelming enough to tell everyone that the matchup was still too unbalanced.

It also told everyone that the true might of the Empyrean Talons was still far from what they were expecting. They all thought that this match would force this super team to reveal more of their cards. But they discovered that it was far from enough.

All it took was a devious plan from the Devil Strategist and everything had turned for the worse.

What happened at the Group Battle was still vivid in everyone's eyes, making them feel pity for the members of the Hien Workshop, who took on that round.

The torturous experience that the group had experienced during that time was 'traumatic' enough even for the audience watching the battle.

But setting everything aside, the Emypyrean Talons were still as scary as their current standings in the leaderboards had projected.

They were still at the number spot while being ahead of the other teams by quite a few points.

However, the God's Paradise and Pandemonium Troupe were still chasing closely behind with a gap of 3 to 5 points respectively.

With this score, the Emypyrean Talons had already secured a firm spot in the top eight of this tournament. Whether they would remain as the first seed or not would be dependent on how dominating they could be at the rematch with the Hien Workshop in the next two days.

...

All the trends in different online platforms, particularly the official forums, were all about the results and the performances of the individuals and teams for this round.

But while everyone was discussing the results of the recent matches of the knockout rounds, the main protagonists of those topics were already busy with their respective business.

The Emypyrean Talons had already returned to the game and were doing their respective quests and training arrangements. Some of them felt like sparring with one another due to the enlightenment that they had gained from the previous rounds, so they went to the Forgotten Temple and looked for a place to be their main venue.

Shin also went back to the independent dungeon to finish his quest. But after a few considerations, he had decided not to directly look for the Evil Being sealed within the dungeon and went to clear all the monsters' nests within it for a hundred percent clear rate.

Now that he could communicate with the Brilliant Flames to a certain degree, he wanted to become more familiar with it by spending more time in the dungeon while also eradicating all the monsters present in the process.

He could also try looking for some hidden conditions or secret bosses within the dungeon, so it would be better not to level anything unturned.

Based on his estimate, it would take him at least an entire week before he could fully clear the dungeon.

Fortunately, there was no time limit to clear the dungeon and the quest, so he still had plenty of time to clear everything.

This could also mean that Shin would not acquire the [Ring of the Brilliant Sun] for a while, but he felt that he would get more rewards this way, slow and steady.

Aside from exploring the dungeon and hunting the Drakons within it, Shin regularly logged out of the game to do his morning training in the real world while also discussing with the rest of the Empyrean Talons about their recent performances and their next strategy for their rematch with the Hien Workshop.

Since it was their home advantage this time, the rules were theirs.

...

After two days, it was time for the rematch.

A lot of people had gathered their friends to watch the matches for this round. They were all excited as the matches would surely be at the highest level given the importance of this round.

For those at the upper bracket, it was a chance to directly proceed to the play-off rounds as top seeds. The result of their matches would determine their final standing in the leaderboards, which would also tell everyone which seed they would be placed into.

Meanwhile, it was the last chance for those at the lower bracket, since if their points were not enough to surpass their opponents for this round, then they would most likely have to say goodbye to their journey in this season of United Cup.

The chosen featured match for this round was obviously those from the lower brackets, as the battles between those teams would be bloody. After all, it was a do-or-die battle for them.

These battles had more significance compared to those in the upper bracket, especially when those teams that were competing for the higher seed in that bracket were not directly fighting against one another.

This made the officials and organizers of the tournament choose the most intense matchup at the lower bracket. If the competing teams also had a decent following or fans, then it would be a great bonus for them.

...

In the meantime, while everyone was gathering toward the channel that they wanted to support, a piece of news suddenly shook the entire tournament.

The Empyrean Talons had applied for a special competition format a day prior, which was also approved by the tournament officials.

The special format that the Empyrean Talons had chosen this time was an all-out Team Competition, where both teams would have to battle it out in a single match to decide the winner of the battle.

Special formats were usually used by powerful teams when they were confident that they could crush their opponents in a single team battle.

The point system in these formats was quite tricky and a little different from what the usual format had.

Usually, the point system was determined by the results of the three rounds of the match, which were the Single Matches, Group Battle, and Team Competition that had 2 (individual point), 3 points, and 5 points, respectively, with a total of 10 points.

But in the special formats, the point system was determined by what kind of battle format that the said team had chosen.

The most common formats were the all-out team competitions, which were similar to the regular team competitions but with a larger number of members sent on the field to represent their team.

In this format, the point system was determined by the number of members remaining standing at the end of the match.

In the first few minutes of the match, a single member was equivalent to 1 point. But this system had a limit of 5 maximum points while the remaining five points would be given to the winning team once they had wiped out the opposing side.

This would then have a total of 10 points at the end of the match.

But this result was only applicable for the perfect win, which meant that the winning team should not have any casualties during the battle.

If the opposing team had killed at least a single member of the opposing side, then that point would be subtracted from the maximum points (10), which would make the final result a 9 to 1 score.

If the said team then managed to kill 5 players from the opposing side before getting wiped out, then the other side could only get a total of 5 points regardless of the number of their kills.

This would end in a draw.

But in case both teams were wiped out at the end of the match, then the two teams would receive an equal amount of points, which was 5 points each and would have the same result as the previous case, a tie.

It was somewhat of a high-risk, high-reward gamble.

This was the reason why most of the team did not choose this format, especially if the opposing side had an equal strength. It was better to proceed with the regular format of the tournament, which was very steady when 'farming' points.

It was also the reason why this was only applicable when they were against a much weaker team.

This was why most of the people could not figure out why the Empyrean Talons had chosen this format, especially when they could secure the top spot in the leaderboards if they continued with how the tournament was supposed to play.

Moreover, the opposing side had top-notch and highly experienced veterans on their team, which could lead to serious accidents.

The Empyrean Talons couldn't have underestimated the lineup of the Hien Workshop, especially after seeing the abilities of their star players in the previous rounds.

If the old veterans were together, then the consequence would be serious even if the lineup of the Emphyrean Talons was filled with superstars.

The people were very confused about this decision.

As for the effects of this piece of information on the live broadcast and ticket selling for the live audience application, only the tournament organizers would know how devastating it was.

All the audience from the different channels had 'migrated' to the official website of the Emphyrean Talons, logging in to the live broadcast of the team only because all the tickets were already sold out in just a couple of minutes.

Whether it was intentional or not, only those at the Emphyrean Talons could tell.

Regardless, the tournament organizers felt like crying after seeing the hundreds of millions of viewers flooding the live channel of the Emphyrean Talons, almost causing the website to crash due to the unstoppable number of players logging in.

Moreover, it was still counting.

Fortunately, Shin and Arthur decided to invest some of their team's earnings in their official website, allowing it to undergo a series of upgrades.

It even surpassed most of the streaming platforms by a large margin due to the funds that they had placed into it.

Miss Bunny, who was waiting to get live, could not help but feel a little excited after seeing the continuous increase in viewers of their channel.

This was not the play-offs yet, but the viewership of their channel had already broken a series of records.

"How I love you guys! I don't have to do any marketing strategy since you guys have already done it yourselves!" she mumbled to herself, further proving that her decision to accept Arthur's and Shin's offers was the best decision she had made in her entire life!

"Furthermore, you guys have already made yourselves a brand!"

Chapter 1757: Crazy Empyrean Talons (Part 2)

...

The Special Format that the Empyrean Talons had chosen was the seven-versus-seven team battle, which had the standard rule of last-man-standing and winner-takes-it-all.

Unlike the most common format, where a team could at least earn a point so long as they had successfully taken down a single member from the opposing group, the format that the Empyrean Talons used was even more ruthless.

In this battle, the Empyrean Talons were crazy enough to bet everything they had on this battle, as it was demanding that both sides bet everything they had on the line.

Due to this format, the winner of the match would take all the points that the losing team had earned in the previous match, which was clearly favorable for the Hien Workshop.

The Hien Workshop had only earned half a point in the previous match, which they had only earned due to the draw that Julius had against Diablo.

Meanwhile, the Empyrean Talons had most of the points, only lacking half a point for a perfect score.

No matter where the audience looked, the Empyrean Talons had the absolute advantage in every area. Taking such a risk was definitely a sign of being crazy.

"Have they gone mad due to their pursuit of earning the perfect score?"

This was the thought that was running inside the head of everyone as it was the only reasonable conclusion that they could come up with at the moment.

After all, the Empyrean Talons was the only team that earned two perfect 10 scores in the entire tournament, placing them at the peak of the leaderboards.

Whether it was intentional or a coincidence, the people felt that the Empyrean Talons had become addicted, or at least obsessed, of earning a perfect score in their matches.

It was not only they who were thinking this way since the Hien Workshop themselves were quite confused at the absurd decision that the Empyrean Talons made.

Aside from this, the only reason that they could think of was that they were being underestimated by their opponents. If that was not the case, then they did not know what it was.

However, Sky King Cielo refused to believe that this was the case. He might not be familiar with the strategist of the opposing side, but he was sure that the opposing side was planning to achieve something after exchanging blows and strategies with Shin in the previous match.

He felt that the Empyrean Talons had, once again, prepared something devious for this re-match. He was not sure what it was, but he was having an ominous feeling about this.

"No wonder those guys from Seven Seas Alliance have chosen to 'run' away from these guys in the previous round," mumbled Cielo after considering everything. "These guys sure are troublesome."

Julius, who was having the same thoughts, could not help but wear a bitter smile. "Not only is their individual and combined battle prowess terrifying, but the psychological pressure that they are imprinting in the minds and hearts of their opponents is equally horrifying."

"Fortunately, such tricks are not effective against us," commented Griff as he was checking on his shield.

He might not be able to do anything much against Simba in the previous match, but this one was going to be different as Cielo and himself were no longer the ones who were solely carrying the pressure.

Heavenly Shield, who was also feeling quite conflicted due to the 'disaster' of the previous match, could not help but clench his fist while speaking. "I will regain my dignity this time."

Due to the seven-versus-seven format that the Empyrean Talons had chosen, these four veteran gods would be fighting together, making their strength reach a whole other level, especially when their team composition and play style perfectly complemented one another.

Adding the combined forces of the 'Twin Heavens' – Faith and Grace – alongside the rising stars of their workshop, 'Young God' Thirteenth Massacre and Sung Jae, who was as strong as a top-notch Maveric God.

Of course, they could only send seven players on the field for this match. But since Thirteenth Massacre and Sung Jae were almost on par with each other, either of them was good enough to represent the team.

But given that the roles of Sky King Cielo and the super rookie Sung Jae were overlapping with one another, the choice would obviously favor the former as this old veteran was more skilled and experienced.

As for the roles of being the auxiliary and support member, the team would surely choose the Twin Heavens since the combined forces of the twin sisters were much better than the individual strength of the 'Sacred Priestess' Pia.

Moreover, their combined forces were more effective for this battle, especially when they were facing the Gentle Goddess once again.

This time, they believed that they could put up a good fight, expecting that they would not be facing that much threat and interruption from the opposition due to the combined protection of the 'Grinding King' Heavenly Shield and 'Strong Lord' Griff, who were legends in the Knight's Profession.

But despite this solid lineup that they had, they still could not afford to underestimate their opponents as those guys would surely have an even stronger lineup.

Even though they had been informed by the organizers ahead of time about the special format that the Emyrean Talons had applied as the direct opponent, the Hien Workshop still could not feel confident with their plans due to how intimidating the possible lineups the Emyrean Talons would be sending for the match.

They obviously could not disclose the format of the match to others as per the rules of tournament had stated.

This was also one of the reasons why they could not properly form a stable plan to counter the Emyrean Talons.

The other reason was that they could not figure out what kind of absurd idea would the Devil Strategist would use this time. Given how crazy and devious the guy, trying to guess his thoughts was impossible.

Adding the series of unusual plans that Shin had 'presented' to everyone in the previous rounds, trying to figure out his plan would be even harder.

While everyone where trying to figure out the lineup of both sides, the system had already announced the start of the battle.

Ding

– "United Cup, Knockout Rounds (Upper Bracket): Special Format Match (7-vs-7 Team Battle) – Empyrean Talons (Home) versus Hien Workshop (Away)!" –

Seeing the announcement from the system, the almost a billion players that were watching from the live stand and online broadcast could not help but feel excited!

They started getting crazy as they intently stared at the screen displaying the members of each side.

Empyrean Talons Lineup:

'Gentle Goddess' Arielle (Godlike Player)

'Battle God' Sickarius (Godlike Player)

'War God' Simba (Godlike Player)

'Elemental Goddess' Charlotte (Godlike Player)

'Dancer of the Shadows' Diablo (Maverick God)

'Sanguine King' Alucard (Maverick God)

'Dark Knight' Owen (Peak Titled Ranker)

...

Hien Workshop Lineup:

'Sky King' Cielo (Maverick God)

'Wizard King' Julius (Maverick God)

'Strong Lord' Griff (Maverick God)

'Grinding King' Heavenly Shield (Maverick God)

'Young God' Thirteenth Massacre (Godlike Player)

'Twin Heavens' Faith and Graces (Peak Titled Rankers, rivaling top gods together)

....

The people could not help but stare blankly at the respective lineups, experiencing mixed emotions.

The lineup of the Hien Workshop was already scary enough to make most of the teams from different forces of the game to run in fear.

Having four highly experienced veterans, rivaling the top-notch gods of the game, alongside a rising and highly talented Godlike Player, was already powerful enough. Then adding the twin sister, who had a perfect understanding and seamless coordination with the other, was like giving a pair of wings to a tiger.

But compared to the intimidating lineup of the opposing side, which had four top-ranked Godlike Players, two apex Maverick Rankers, and a Peak Titled Ranker that could match the gods of the virtual world, the lineup of the Hien Workshop was somewhat less appealing.

A lineup filled with superstars had a different impact compared to the other.

But what 'confused' everyone even more was the fact that the Emyrean Talons seemed to be planning to use a 'standard' composition for this battle.

This made the people, who were used to their shenanigans, feel a little 'disappointed'. They were expecting to see another unusual and mind-boggling strategy from them.

Regardless, watching this almost 'full' power of the Emyrean Talons was still a treat to their eyes.

At the same time, the other top forces within the game that were paying attention to this match could not help but buckle up and focus more as they knew that this was a good chance to get a glimpse of Emyrean Talons' true strength.

"Tsk! Tsk! This is going to be a bloody one. I hope the Hien Workshop can force the Emyrean Talons to show their hands a little more."

"It is a pity that we can't see 'Dragon God' Siegfried in action as well. If he was in the lineup, I wonder how broken it is."

As the higher-ups of different forces were discussing with one another, the players of each team were finally sent into the battlefield, signifying the start of the match!

Chapter 1758: Battle of the Epics

.....

The battlefield that the Empyrean Talons had chosen was a 'regular' gladiator's arena with a much larger size. This battle arena was comparable to ten football fields in the real world.

There were some props scattered around the area to make it a little complicated just like some stone pillars, broken walls, huge boulders, and collapsed buildings that made the place somewhat complicated.

But despite all the props, this place was still not as complicated as most of the teams used for their home advantage. It was just a basic ruined place that the players could access in the battle arenas, making it easier to memorize.

Given this, it was clear that the Empyrean Talons were planning to have a head-on battle against the Hien Workshop from the very beginning.

Fully understanding the Empyrean Talons' intentions, the live audience and online viewers could not help but feel more excited as they knew that there would be a frontal confrontation right at the beginning of the match.

"Hooo!"

"Whoo!"

"Let's go!"

...

As everyone was in an uproar, both sides quickly made their move right after the start of the battle.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

They immediately went into a formation and charged straight to the center of the battlefield, not wasting too much time for strategic planning.

It did not take that long before the two sides could spot one another from a distance, as both were charging straight to the center of the battle arena.

The first to spot the opposing sides were naturally the marksmen of each team, who were using their respective means to scout their opponents.

The Spirit Hawk in the sky was looking at the incoming members of the Empyrean Talons while a bunch of shadow bats scattered in every corner of the battlefield, watching every move of the opposing team.

Cielo was the first to make a greeting.

Nocking a Mana-Enchanted Arrow on the string of this bow, he aimed upwards, planning to send an arcing shot toward the incoming rivals in the distance.

Jade Light surrounded his arms, the arrow, and the bow. It then turned into a blazing energy that violently danced along the wind.

Twang!

Right after releasing the arrow, it flew straight in the air and headed toward the opposite side, drawing a beautiful arc in the air before transforming into an energy beam that was charging straight to the ranks of the Empyrean Talons.

'Heavenly Archery: First Arrow – Wrath of Nature'

Shriek!

The beam of light turned into a giant bird made of pure wind elemental mana. It strongly descended from the sky and sharply dived toward members of the Empyrean Talons.

Boom!

But before it could even reach a hundred meters from the group, a powerful shot could be heard from the opposite direction.

Alucard, who was lying on his stomach on top of a somewhat intact building in the distance, pulled the trigger of his sniper rifle and fired a shot that carried a huge amount of blood energy.

The crimson bullet flew straight to the giant bird, leaving a sanguine trail in the air.

'Sanguine Inheritance: (Application) Gunfighting – Blood Shadow'

Boom!

The powerful shot accurately hit the head of the giant eagle before proceeding to pierce through the rest of its body.

This shot had scattered the violent wind energy that the giant bird carried, making it dissipate in the air.

Bang! Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

It was at this moment that Leonard and Owen charged straight to their opponents, transforming into a series of blurs while moving forward.

Meanwhile, Shin and Diablo suddenly disappeared under stealth. They used the ruined structures of the surroundings to further hide their tracks and avoid being marked by the opposing side.

Alice, on the other hand, floated in the air while casting a series of spells that formed an array of magic circles around her.

With a wave of her hand, fierce elemental dragons appeared and danced around her, creating a stunning sight.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

The five elemental dragons then opened their mouths wide before charging at the incoming rivals from the opposing side.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

They had covered the tracks of Leonard and Owen, who were only slightly behind and using the dragons as a form of cover to hide their figures.

Bang!

'Grinding King' Heavenly Shield was the first to break free from the formation on his side, raising his towering shield before slamming it on the ground immediately after.

Boom!

Stacking a series of skills one after another, he summoned a towering wall of energy that erected a fortress-like defense.

'Class Fighting Style: Great Wall of Heavens'

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The wall was immediately bombarded by the attacks of the elemental dragons, making it shake violently. But despite all the elemental storms that the dragons had created, the sturdy wall remained intact and stood strong to withstand everything.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when Owen, who was covering his entire body with his unique mana manipulation technique – the Divine Avatar Form, charged through the elemental storm and rammed his shield at the tower wall of the opposing side.

Boom!

The collision created a strong shockwave that forced both sides to retreat alongside the huge negative numbers appearing over their heads, which signified the damage from the clash.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Warm lights immediately shone on the bodies of the two knights, restoring their respective health bars to full.

With a slight pause, Owen and Heavenly Shield stomped their foot on the ground to launch themselves at one another and initiated a series of intense clashes against one another.

They even used their respective unique combat techniques to further enhance their powers.

'Class Fighting Style: Divine Combo'

'Class Fighting Style: Heavenly Destruction'

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the two were clashing against one another repeatedly, Leonard suddenly broke through the cloud of smoke and descended from the sky, crushing straight to the ranks of the opposing side.

'Supreme Blood Sutra: Sanguine Meteor'

Swoosh!

Seeing him, 'Strong Lord' Griff immediately raised his shield as he took a defensive stance, summoning a huge barrier that enveloped the people behind and protecting them with it.

'Class Fighting Style: The Lord's Order'

Boom!

The clash produced yet another storm of shockwaves that swept through everything.

The two maintained their postures for a couple of seconds before separating from one another.

Bang! Bang!

They respectively tried to regain their footing while relieving the force that they had gotten from the impact before launching themselves toward one another.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Yet another intense clash was initiated as their weapons repeatedly collided against each other.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Shin and Diablo suddenly appeared at the backline of the Hien Workshop, launching a coordinated attack from flanking directions.

Swoosh!

But before they could even reach the Faith and Grace, a snowstorm suddenly manifested, halting them from going further.

Wizard King Julius finished casting his spell and summoned a series of magical formations that protected him and the twin sisters from any threat.

He stood on a tall platform along with the Twin Heavens, who were standing behind him and casting a series of buffs, debuffs, and healing spells under his protection.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Amid the violent storm of ice and snow, the figure of 'Young God' Thirteenth Massacre slowly emerged as he wielded his spear with one hand and pointed it diagonally toward the ground.

His wind powers complemented the snowstorm as he manipulated it at will.

Julius had even summoned a pair of ice golems with decent combat prowess to help this young Godlike Player.

He knew that it would be difficult for Thirteenth Massacre to ward off the combined forces of Shin and Diablo, who were among the most powerful gods within the game. But with his help and the twin sisters to assist them, their side had a slight advantage in this faceoff.

Taking a deep breath, Thirteenth Massacre calmed himself before suddenly charging forward to face Diablo, leaving Shin to Julius and his ice golems.

Swoosh!

Shin and Diablo exchanged glances with one another before suddenly sprinting ahead, welcoming the challenge with open arms.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Then, there was another intense clash between the two sides, further throwing the battlefield into an even more chaotic state.

Diablo did not dare to underestimate his opponent, despite knowing that he had the slight advantage in terms of overall battle prowess. After all, the opposing side could match his speed with the use of wind element, which was further augmented by the snowstorm summoned by the Wizard King.

Shin, on the other hand, knew that he could not lower his guard since he was fully aware of what Julius was capable of. He knew that he could not hold his strength back as the latter would try to use it against him.

...

The initial clashes between the two sides were too strong to be called an opening act since they were too intense and destructive. Regardless, everyone welcomed it as this was the main reason why they had tuned in to this match.

They were either shouting crazily or flooding the chat with emotes and a variety of reactions, showing how they loved this battle.

They all felt that it was worth it to skip the other matches and focus on this matchup, as it lived up to their expectations.

For them, this was the true charm of the United Cup.

Chapter 1759 Battle of the Epics (Part 2)

...

In the Team Competition of the previous match, the Empyrean Talons had a huge advantage due to the 'extra' member that they had, who could either be a damage dealer or a secondary range support.

But this time, the Hien Workshop had a decent advantage due to their double tank and dual support/healer/

They had a more solid frontline that could swap place any time and could create a solid wall that could protect the rest behind them from different directions.

Then there was a pair of supports that could either give them buffs and heals or debuff their opponents with dark prayers and spells.

It was only at this moment that Grace and Faith had showed everyone where they were called the Twin Heavens. They assisted the entire team with their auxiliary spells, which greatly enhanced the overall prowess of the entire team.

Cloe might be the best healer within the game, but she could not do everything by herself. Even if she could assist the entire team by herself with her buffs, healing spells, and crowd-controls, she was still lacking in terms of weakening their opponents with debuffs, curses, and similar spells.

This was also the reason why Shin had decided to recruit Huahua, who was a shaman and possessed things that the team was lacking.

As for why Shin did not choose to increase the number of their members for this match, he had two main reasons.

First was to persevere and hide more of their strength for the future battles, especially when they were guaranteed to proceed to the play-off rounds.

The other reason was because most of their members were quite a rookie and unable to withstand the pressure, particularly Huahua, who was the youngest among the group. He wanted them to see how a top-notch battle could be from a spectator's perspective before sending them in the real battle later.

He also wanted to show them how powerful their teammates were despite facing powerful opponents, assuring the rookies and letting them trust more outside their regular raids.

Watching from a different perspective would greatly help these members, particularly Huahua, who he had instructed to only watch the twin sister of the opposing side. He even specially told her to focus on Faith, who was a Dark Priest and had a similar role as her in battle.

As for the others, they were quite an expert themselves, so he trusted that they knew which person they needed to watch and observe, hoping to learn more about their respective roles in a team battle.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Alice was forced by Cielo to cancel her spells due to the series of power shots that the latter had sent. The Sky King was planning to suppress the opposing side with his overwhelming barrage of attacks.

Cloe was also included. The range of his attacks encompassed both the girls, making it hard for them to assist the team.

This also gave his teammates more space they maneuver with.

Unfortunately, Alucard, who possessed the longest range within the field, responded in kind. He started targeting the backline of the opposing team with his sniper shots.

His shots were not only highly accurate, but powerful as well, giving the twin sister enough trouble. They were no longer free to do anything they wanted because of the barrage of bullets being sent at them.

This forced Julius to direct some of his attention to dealing with the bullets, using his spells to create an array of ice walls that could cover the girls.

But this slight distraction created an opening for Shin, who was still harassing their backline. He started targeting Faith and Grace once again, putting a lot of pressure on the Wizard King.

In response, Thirteenth Massacre was forced to lend a hand, dropping back a little more and facing both Shin and Diablo at the same time, only being assisted by the pair of ice golems.

It did not take that long for the golems to collapse under the barrage of attacks from the two, endangering not only the 'Young God', but the entire backline as well.

If not for the timely assistance of Cielo, who had to redirect his attention to help him, then Thirteenth Massacre would have most likely been taken down by the combined forces of Shin and Diablo.

Because of these sudden changes, the two tanks of the Hien Workshop were forced to drop their position and formed another line of defense for their backline members.

They had created a wall alongside Thirteenth Massacre, who had coordinated with them quite well.

Alongside the top-notch assistance by the twin sisters, this line of defense became even more powerful and reached a very high level.

Under the protection of the three, the Wizard King and Sky King started bombarding their surroundings with their large-scale spells and skills, respectively, forcing the other side to lessen their aggressiveness.

They had started showcasing their signature formation.

'Culmination Fortress' – the famous formation that made the Hien Workshop famous throughout the tournament.

They had mainly relied on this formation to defeat their powerful rivals from the previous rounds of the United Cup.

They just did not find the good chance to show it in the previous match because they had to arrange their formation strategically due to how tricky their opponents were.

They believed that they would at least fight the very stacked lineup of the Empyrean Talons with this formation.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Even the audience believed this as well, which was why they paid more attention to the response of Emphyrean Talons. As much as they believed with this powerful battle formation, everyone also 'trusted' that the Devil Strategist had more cards in his sleeves to deal with this.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Just like what everyone was thinking, the Emphyrean Talons had made their move.

And little did everyone know, this was the exact moment that Shin had pictured out when he arranged the team to attack more aggressively in the beginning of the battle.

In the distance, Alucard picked up his sniper rifle and stood up. He then started jumping from one collapsed building after another, looking for another sniping location.

At the same time, Alice suddenly stood beside Cloe, who was already waiting for her. The girls then made a series of identical movements, drawing some ancient runes in the air that floated around them and formed a huge magical formation.

Wizard King Julius, true to his name, had immediately realized something after seeing the actions of the girls. He instantly picked up the violent and aggressive movements of the mana in the air, which also almost robbed him of his control over his spells.

"This is bad!" The expression on his face suddenly turned serious and immediately warned his partner.
"Cielo!"

Sky King Cielo did not need to hear more about it as he could also tell that there was something wrong with the spell that the opposing side were preparing.

He swiftly raised his bow and arrow, aiming at the pair in the distance and firing with a barrage of his skills.

Twang!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But before the attacks could even reach a decent distance from their targets, Shin's figure suddenly appeared in the air, assuming his signature stance.

Click!

He then unsheathed the [Yamato] and swung it multiple times in the air, sending a series of electric arcs to block the incoming barrage of Mana-Enchanted Arrows.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Lightning) – Flash Storm'

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Seeing that, Cielo immediately instructed the others. "Faith and Grace, prepare a combination spell! Julius, summon your Ice Rampant Formation! Griff and Heavenly Shield, force them out!"

The group immediately responded, reacting almost instantly.

As the three magical classes behind were preparing their respective spells, the pair of tanks adjusted their respective positions, stepping forward to form a slightly larger line of defense.

Behind them, Thirteenth Massacre did not move from his position but augmented the movements of the two knights with his wind abilities.

Swoosh!

But as they were adjusting their formation, Leonard had suddenly landed between the pair. He then forced the two to engage in a heated battle with him by brandishing his war axes with all his might.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the two knights were pulled in a series of chaotic exchanges with Leonard, Diablo tried to slip into their formation.

But he was immediately discovered by Cielo, who quickly put a mark on him and leave Thirteenth Massacre to deal with him.

Cielo then continued to fire at Cloe and Alice, who were still in the middle of casting their combination spell. However, his attacks had never touched their targets due to Shin and Owen, who were accurately and steadily blocking them.

The series of domino effects that affected the battlefield led to an even more intense battle.

But this time, the two were competing with their respective battle formations while waiting for their respective combination spell to finish.

Not long after, everyone where shocked at the stunning sight that the two sides had showed after completing their preparations for their powerful moves.

Chapter 1760: Battle of the Epics (Part 3)

.....

Boom!

Right after the completion of Cloe and Alice's chants, a huge magic circle suddenly appeared on the ground and spread in every direction.

The symbols drawn on the magic circle looked mysterious and incomprehensible, signifying that they were not ordinary. These symbols were composed of the ancient runes that the girls had deciphered from the hall of the Forgotten Temple, where Ronan was previously sealed.

The might of these runes was different from the last time Cloe and Alice had used them, which was the sealing and trapping formation that they used against the Seven Seas Alliance.

Based on the mana frequency that Julius had picked up from the magic circle, he could tell that it was a special summoning circle or something with similar features.

Boom!

As the girls stood at two points, which acted as the cores of the magic circles, Owen took a step back and stood on top of another core center.

He formed a triangular formation alongside Cloe and Alice as he activated one of the signature skills of his current class.

'Ancient Protector Skill (Tier 3): Avatar of the Guardian King'

Boom!

Not long after, a huge apparition of a warrior knight appeared behind him. It was donning a set of golden armor that was filled with glowing runes and releasing a sacred light.

But the phenomenon did not stop there since the warrior knight seemed to have fused with the magic circle that Cloe and Alice had created right after it was summoned.

Boom!

With three acting as the center, the huge magic circle released a storm of mana fluctuations, which transformed into a towering pillar of light that pierced through the sky.

Swoosh!

Immediately after, a colossal spiritual being suddenly walked out from it, releasing an overwhelming pressure that filled the entire area and suppressing the members of the Hien Workshop.

This spiritual being shared a similar appearance to the warrior knight that Owen had summoned earlier. But this time, it had a humanoid upper body while having the body of a sturdy and muscular horse on the lower half.

The set of armor that it was wearing looked more sacred due to the healing light that it was constantly emitting.

It was also holding a shield and a spear that seemed to be made of different elements, which were constantly flickering and swimming through their surface.

Its hooves were also covered with multicolored energy that seemed to carry the warrior knight and let it run into the air.

'Empyrean Talons Combination Technique: Elemental Guardian of the Sacred Heavens'

This was an original technique that the Empyrean Talons had created, which would most likely become one of their symbols in the future.

Boom!

Right after summoning, the colossal knight suddenly stepped forward before thrusting its elemental spear toward the Hien Workshop.

...

Tsk!

Wizard King Julius could not help but smile bitterly after seeing the might of that single thrust. Fortunately, they had also finished their preparations for their signature combination.

They would not be going down without a fight.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A huge group of ice ramparts appeared around the group, forming a huge formation. They acted as a special channel that connected the magic circle that appeared underneath the group.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

At the same time, Faith and Grace, who had been praying since earlier to prepare their combination spell, coordinated with the magic formation.

They had infused their opposing powers of darkness and light into the magic circle while maintaining their respective states.

Swoosh!

Not long after, a huge and majestic dome of energy was created, protecting everyone from the incoming attack.

'Hien Workshop Signature Technique: Dome of Two Zeniths'

Boom!

As the elemental spear struck the dome, its surface shook violently, signifying the might of the attack.

But despite all of that, the dome still maintained its strong form and remained standing. This showed that the members of the Hien Workshop were not that simple either.

"Our side may have a stronger might, but we somewhat lacked the perfect coordination that they have," commented Shin as he retreated as fast as he could, escaping from the powerful shockwaves caused by the impact.

"But it is not a big deal since this is our first time using this technique," he added, seemingly telling everyone the boldness that the Empyrean Talons to try something in an actual battle.

Treating the battlefield as a testing ground for their newly created and unpolished technique was indeed something crazy. It was only insane people who would dare to do that.

On the other side, Julius quickly called their frontline members right after seeing another attack from the colossal knight. "Heavenly Shield! Griff!"

The two knights quickly acted after hearing his call. They simultaneously raised their shields before slamming them into the ground, activating their respective versions of Shield Wall at the same time.

'Class Fighting Style: Great Wall of Heavens'

'Class Fighting Style: The Great Fortress'

Bang! Bang!

Immediately after, the two versions of Shield Walls melded with the energy dome, making it sturdier and stronger.

Boom!

Yet another shockwave spread in every direction as the elemental struck the barrier protecting the members of the Hien Workshop.

"Fortunately, they have yet to master that technique," commented Julius as he could sense some disharmony in the movements of the colossal spiritual knight, making it only capable of doing some basic actions.

"Let me try to break their formation," said Cielo as he started firing powerful skills at the trio of the Emphyrean Talons that were forming the special technique.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

But before they could even reach their target, a series of shots suddenly rang from another direction, shooting down all the attacks that he had just sent with crimson bullets.

"Tsk! That guy's accuracy sure is getting on my nerves," commented Cielo with a slight frown.

It had been a while since he had encountered another marksman with a similar level of precision, arousing his competitiveness.

Glancing at the Shin, Leonard, and Diablo, who seemed to be planning to do something, Cielo could not help but have a bad feeling.

He gritted his teeth as he made a difficult decision. "Let's use our all-out combination technique as well."

Hearing that, the group could not help but turn to him, seemingly asking if he was sure about this.

Julius, on the other hand, fully understood the thoughts of his friend and old-time partner. He knew that it was useless to hide their trump cards and save them for the latter part of the competition if they could not pass through this predicament.

If they lost this match, they would not earn even half a point that Julius had managed to get in the previous match.

They would proceed to the lower bracket without a point earning for this round, putting them in a difficult position in the later stages of the tournament.

It was better to use their cards now and reveal them to everyone rather than not having any chances at all and losing their positions in the tournament later.

Having seen Cielo's resolute face, the entire group agreed and moved as fast as they could.

They had rearranged their positions as the dome withstood the repeated attacks from the colossal knight.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Not long after, Heavenly Shield and Griff broke free from their respective positions and leaped into the air while raising their shields. They then used another combination technique, summoning a gigantic shield that blocked the incoming strike from the Elemental Guardian.

Boom!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The pair was sent flying into the ground, which cost them almost half of their respective health bars.

This signified tough they were, especially when they had forced the colossal knight to retreat a couple of steps.

This gave the rest of their team time to prepare for their all-out attack.

The two were in a slightly dangerous position as they were not exposed to any ambush, but before they could even snipe down by Alucard, a series of heals immediately restored their health to full and saved them from being killed.

Thirteenth Massacre had also come in their aid, helping them repel the combined forces of Shin, Leonard, and Diablo, who were supposed to come to finish them off.

As the clashes between these guys became chaotic, the rest of the Hien Workshop were already making their move.

Cielo was standing at the center of the ice rampant formation while holding his bow. He had also nocked a special arrow into the bow as he absorbed all the energy provided by the magic formation.

Julius was casting a series of spells, combining them. It then later formed a huge bow and arrow, which was somewhat connected to Cielo through magical strings.

At the same time, Faith and Grace infused their respective powers into the formation, channeling an even larger amount of mana into the magic formation.

The black and white mana that they were channeling then moved toward the icy bow and arrow, particularly the latter as it formed a special arrow infused with the opposing powers, which somehow worked in harmony.

Seeing this phenomenon, the Shin and the others quickly made their move, trying to stop the other party from whatever they were planning.

But they were immediately obstructed by Heavenly Shield, Griff, and Thirteenth Massacre, who relied on an advanced battle formation to ward off their advances.

The only one who was free to attack was Alucard. Unfortunately, he was unable to do anything either due to Julius' crafty maneuvers of his rampart formation, either blocking his attacks or hiding the rest of the Hien Workshop behind them.

It did not take that long for Cielo and the others to complete all the preparations for the combination technique.

He swiftly aimed forward as he saw the Elemental Guardian thrusting its elemental spear at them once again.

As he pulled the bowstring along with the special arrow, the huge icy bow behind him mimicked his actions alongside the black-and-white arrow loaded into it.

Twang!

'Hien Workshop Combination Technique: The Arrow that shoots down the Heaven'

Boom!

A powerful sonic boom was created right after the arrows were released from the bow and headed straight to the incoming attack of their opponent.

Zong~!

Seeing that, the trio from the Empyrean Talons infused more of their powers into the magic formation underneath them, strengthening the Elemental Guardian and letting it release an even stronger attack.

Swoosh!

Boom!

A massive explosion erupted as the elemental spear and magic arrow clashed against one another, creating a colossal storm and a dome of violent energy that spread in every direction.

Seeing that, Shin, Leonard, and Diablo swiftly underwent an Elemental Spirit Possession and used their respective means to escape the range of the explosion.

The energy storm lasted for more than a minute before subsiding.

It then showed everyone a huge crater that signified how powerful the earlier collision of powers was.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

But before everything could sink in everyone's head, a chaotic fight continued at the center of this crater.

Casting their gazes at the sources of the sounds, they saw that the Empyrean Talons and Hien Workshop resumed fighting.

But this time, the latter group was missing a couple of members.

The audience did not know what exactly happened due to the curtain of light that hid both groups earlier, but they could at least guess that the Empyrean Talons had won an edge, resulting in the current situation.

It did not take long for the Empyrean Talons to wrap up the battle with their members, who remained in a perfect state for battle.

The earlier clash had almost drained the mana and energy of Alice, Cloe, and Owen, which made them incapable of continuing the battle.

But the opposing side did not come out unscratched either as Faith, Grace, and Cielo were in a similar state as well.

This gave Alucard the perfect opportunity to finish them off before Julius could respond. After all, the Wizard King had spent quite a large amount of mana for the previous move as well.

At the same time, Shin, Leonard, and Diablo immediately made their move as soon as they saw this. They started an even stronger assault that forced Heavenly Shield, Griff, and Thirteenth Massacre into repeated retreat.

With their combined forces, the battle finally ended.

The regular audience cheered for the intense and entertaining battle while the apex experts and higher-ups of different forces of the game stared at the Empyrean Talos with solemnness.

This battle indeed showed everyone a glimpse of what this group of crazy monsters was capable of. But it was just the tip of the iceberg as it was clear to them that the Empyrean Talons were just 'playing around' and testing things out despite how competitive the competition was.