

Rui and Kane leapt back as several applicants immediately began targeting them.

"Tsk, fucking scavengers." Rui cursed, still, he wasn't able to suppress a grin. This was the first time he would be fighting!magic

The first one to throw a punch looked to be around fifteen years old, male. His form was terrible and his strike was practically telegraphed, Rui managed to dodge it while throwing a strike to his opponent's nose, aiming his middle knuckle at the tip.

THWACK

('Tsk, it was slightly off-target.')

But it was close enough, the nose was a particularly vulnerable spot. Getting struck there extremely hard caused pain and disorientation. Rui was resolved to land another strike while his opponent had openings. He threw a fully winded kick straight to his opponent's testicles, leaving him in agonizing pain.

Rui on the other hand was ecstatic!

('Yes! My first combat victory!') He celebrated before-

BAM

A powerful kick assailed him from the side, slamming into his arm.

"Aargh!"

The ambusher rushed forward to grab his badge. When suddenly-

"Not so quickly." Kane intercepted with a high kick that landed precisely on the applicant's chin, cleanly knocking him out.

"You okay?" He asked Rui, helping him up.

"Yeah..." Rui groaned.

('Tsk, I was too careless. I need to be more alert. I would have lost my badge if not for Kane.') Rui scolded himself.

"Thanks for saving me... But you didn't have to."

"I know, it's just that it would be a shame if you didn't enter the Academy. It hasn't been long, but you're fun to spend time with."

He threw Rui an awkward smile, Rui snorted mirthfully in response.

"I owe you one."

"Don't worry about it, but don't get the wrong idea though. I can't help you much, back then I was in a really sweet spot to knock him out so it was easy, but this round will be hard, I can protect myself, but not you."

"Yeah, I know. I did not join this exam hoping someone would protect me." Rui steeled his gaze at the applicants that had begun to approach them.

('Their goal is my badge, but they need to reach within arm's length in order to take it. The key is to not let them get that close to me. I'll need to rely on kicks.') Rui decided. It was also a conclusion that Kane himself came to.

Kick

Kick

Parry

Block

Retreat

Kick

Kick

Check

Kick

Retreat

Block

Dodge, this was a close one. He almost touched the badge.

Kick

Rui had absolutely no sense of time, he had absolutely no idea how much time had passed at all. It could have been a few minutes, an hour, a few hours. Heck, maybe it had been a few days.

('Certainly feels like it has.')

He panted, arms on his knees trying to catch his breath. He'd gotten a moment's rest thanks to the fact that his targetters had been attacked by a few low-ranking applicants. Buying him a brief but crucial reprieve.

His tactics were not as effective as he had hoped they would be.

('For one, although kicks can be used to maintain distance, that's because their range exceeds that of punches or jabs. But I'm only thirteen-years-old, my legs aren't really much bigger than the arms of my targetters due to the age gap.')

This was a problem because they could potentially rob his badge while avoiding a kick, they had come close multiple times, far too close for comfort.

('Secondly, kicks have range and power, but lower flexibility and greater demand for balance than punches, because you're balancing on one leg while shifting your center of mass greatly as a consequence of generating greater force. If someone gets super close while avoiding a kick, it's extremely difficult to combat effectively because it's difficult to stop the ongoing momentum and

motion of your body in the middle of a kick, and also because your body is balancing on one leg, it takes much more effort not to lose balance in such a scenario.')

This meant that if someone dodged a full-powered, max range kick while moving closer to the person kicking, then the person performing the kick was practically screwed. At the very least, this was true at the Martial Apprentice or below level of skill.

This further implied that Rui had to throw very light kicks, he could not afford to throw kicks that made it difficult to counter any misses. But lighter kicks generally had shorter range and power, thus it did not deter the targeters from attempting to close the distance.

,m Rui had, of course, attempted to alleviate the problem. He attempted to do so by ensuring the burden of his weight was being supported and maintained by only one of his two legs at any point in time. This allowed him to throw kicks quicker. The reason was because, normally, every time he chose to kick with a certain leg, he had to remove all of his body weight from that leg, the kicking leg, and shift onto the other leg, the supporting leg.

This had to be done and only then after could he launch a kick without losing balance. However, by permanently keeping his weight on one leg, he did not have to waste time shifting his weight every time. Thus, he had reduced the time period needed to throw light kicks, furthermore he had reduced the recovery time needed to defend properly should one of his kicks fail.

These tactics and solutions were not revolutionary, nor were they extremely effective. But together they were able to allow Rui to barely hang on to his badge without losing it.

('Kane is doing much better than I am.')

Kane's maneuvering was truly amazing to Rui. Watching him move gave Rui the impression that his body was weightless.

('He has an extremely high muscle mass to body mass ratio. He's able to move his with great easy because that.')

He was able to narrowly avoid jabs and grabs, while simultaneously setting up attacks that exploited his targetter's openings. This seemed to be relevant what Kane mentioned to Rui about his Martial Art prior to the start of the round.

"So, this is a Martial Art, it's still in the earliest stage, but it's still amazing!"