

6867 HEF-Z16 Totori

MAXXX

Ves always had a good awareness of the capabilities of Casella's Command Field.

He knew what she could do, but that did not necessarily mean he had discovered the greater potential behind her set of abilities.

Even he had not imagined that Casella would be able to use the combination of her Command Field and Dragon Scales to amplify the performance of a first-class multipurpose mech like the Dracoloid to such an extent.

"It is rather coincidental that Dragon Scales synergizes so well with a dragon mech called the Dracoloid." Gloriana mirthfully commented. "Are they related

to each other?"

"That is unlikely." Jovy shook his head.

"Dragon Scales is a resonating alloy that was originally designed to assist drone mechs rather than command mechs.

Dracoloid is a much more recent product designed by Master Ziri Crenshaw of the Mech Supremacist Faction, who you may better know as the Dragon Queen."

Several people's expressions changed at the mention of this name.

The Dragon Queen was one of the more eccentric mech designers of the industry. She was famous for being nuts about dragons. She loved the mythical creatures so much that she had dedicated her entire life and career to designing dragon mechs.

Although her obsession was rather extreme, she knew how to design dragon

mechs better than anyone else.

"The Dragon Queen led the design project that resulted in the Dracoloid." Gloriana proudly mentioned as if she had a stake in it. "She is also responsible for developing the interesting flamethrower and the mechanism that enables the dragon mech to eat transphasic alloys to empower its fire breathing capabilities. I am already beginning to consider whether we should invite her to help us design the Promethea Mark II Project."

"I don't think that is a good idea." Ves quickly shared his own thoughts. "Saint Isobel Kotin is a rifleman mech specialist who has only made use of humanoid mechs in her career. A dragon mech fights much differently from what she is accustomed to. Much of her marksmanship skills do not translate well

in a beast mech. Also, dragon mech configurations are best at close to mid-ranged combat. We are planning to position the Promethea Mark II as a mid-to-long-ranged asset, specially made to burn down enemy warships and phase leaders alike. Putting Isobel in a dragon mech that is similar in nature to the Dracoloid is like forcing a trained sniper to fight with her fists."

"Not all dragon mechs are close combat specialists." Alexa commented. "There are larger and heavier mech configurations that are designed as mobile artillery platforms. By sacrificing their ability to wield external equipment like humanoid mechs, they often boast superior mobility, armor and room for weapon modules."

Ves shook his head. "That is great, but the Promethea's mech concept has worked

fine for Isobel. She wouldn't have been able to advance to the rank of ace pilot so quickly if that was not the case. I will not rashly try to upend her entire combat system and turn the Promethea into a dragon mech. End of discussion."

With that distraction out of the way, the discussion soon went back on track.

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar had voiced a clear preference for the Dracoloid as the interceptor of the Premier Fleet. Everyone could see why she favored this dragon mech.

They spent a bit of time looking for alternatives. It was not a good idea to prematurely pin their hopes on the first mech model that caught their fancy.

Many of the mech designers found numerous first-class multipurpose mech

designs that offered similar value to the Dracoloid.

However, these humanoid mech models lacked the recklessly powerful Rush Mode that could drastically amplify their mobility.

They also lacked a trump card as awesome as the devastating short-ranged transphasic flamethrower weapon system.

While there were mechs that did possess powerful armaments that could pack a mean punch, they were either too heavy, too demanding or too exotic.

That did not necessarily disqualify them for use. Many RA mech units eagerly adopted these models.

Some of the better ones even maintained a mech ecosystem that worked well when fighting alongside other mechs of the

same system.

However, Ves had no interest in getting locked in an exclusive mech ecosystem. It was easy to adopt one, but difficult to abandon it later on. The more powerful the ecosystem, the greater the price of quitting.

The Dracoloid was thankfully free of such schemes.

It was for this reason and more that the gathering concluded that it was their best choice.

"Thank you for affirming my proposed mech model." Saint Commander said with a smile. "The Dracoloid is an excellent interceptor machine. It may be overly specialized for this role, but we are already accustomed to this. The Dracoloid can still be used to fight against warships and fixed

fortifications, though it will not be able to perform as well against these enemies. We need to select another multipurpose mech that primarily excels at outputting accurate firepower at longer ranges."

"Do you have any suggestions, Casella?" Ves asked.

Casella briefly smiled. "I have already browsed the catalog and bookmarked a dozen or so that have caught my interest. However, I do not think it would be conducive to this discussion for me to voice all of my preferences. It may be better for you to browse the catalog yourself and think about which ones best align with our needs. I can tell you later if your choice is on my shortlist."

That sounded quite thoughtful of the ace commander. She probably did not want everyone else to do nothing else but nod

their heads and say yes.

By withholding her opinions, she was forcing all of the gathered mech designers to use their brain power and judgment.

Ves turned to one of the new Apprentices of the Design Department. "Tarsa."

"Uh, yes, sir?"

"You have taken the time to browse the RA mech catalog. Give me a recommendation. Which mech has earned your appreciation?"

The female mech designer looked nonplussed for a moment, but she quickly adjusted herself and transmitted her choice to the central projector.

"I think that the HEF-Z16 Totori MAXXX is a viable choice for a ranged superiority platform. As you can see, it is a larger and more massive multipurpose mech than the

Dracoloid. What stands out to me is that it features a more even balance between firepower, defenses, and mobility."

Several people's expressions turned weird when they read the description of this humanoid multipurpose mech.

"Interesting name." Ves commented.

"That is an understatement." Gloriana muttered. "I can already tell that a boy was in charge of this design project."

Tarsa Merovik ignored the discussion on the naming of the mech. "The Totori MAXXX is defined by its weapons systems. At close range, it wields a flexible plasma whip and is mounted with 3 integrated Arc-Pulse CIWS that excels at intercepting ordnance... or nearby strike craft. At mid-range, much of its mech frame is dedicated to housing the formidable

integrated MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons that can fire devastating streams of hot plasma. At long range, it wields a single ULTRAMAXXX High-Velocity Mass Driver that is designed to function like a handheld siege weapon. Its hit rate against small dcrafft is not high, but it is much easier to land shot at larger and less maneuverable targets. Oh, the mech also boasts a pair of shoulder-mounted missile launchers."

"..."

For a moment, nobody said anything. They were all taken aback by the... eccentric concept and branding of the multipurpose mech.

"I concur with Gloriana." Alexa broke the silence. "The lead designer of the Totori MAXXX is most definitely male."

"Does he really need to use 3 X's for the MAXes?" Ves asked while scratching his head. "A single X already does the job."

"Perhaps he thinks that it is not extreme enough for his liking."

After the mech designers got over the odd naming scheme, they began to analyze the design for its strengths and weaknesses.

Gloriana most definitely had a lot of opinions about the design. "This mech is too loud. It has an abundance of power, but distressingly little finesse. Look at how the bulky MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons and its support systems take up so much capacity. The firepower of these weapon systems are admittedly high, but their resource consumption is also high. The Plasma whip is a rather interesting weapon, but it is too unconventional and requires dedicated training to master. The

most excessive weapon of all is the ULTRAMAXXX High-Velocity Mass Driver. It is long, massive and unwieldy. It is excellent at damaging large targets at longer ranges, but it is deadweight when used against anything smaller, lighter and faster."

"I think that is an acceptable tradeoff." Ves opined. "The Totori MAXXX is clearly designed to fight like a mobile artillery mech. The mass driver is a pure siege weapon and should only be reserved against big enemies. The other weapon systems are much more effective against alien phasefighters and comparable enemy units. In fact, the MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons are probably its best all-round armaments. They can inflict high damage against enemy warships, but can also be used to melt apart enemy phasefighters with reasonable accuracy at mid range."

Alexa began to frown. She clearly did not like the configuration of this multipurpose mech model.

"The Totori MAXXX is weakest at close range. It will suffer when it is overtaken by enemies that have rushed forward. The plasma whip is an interesting weapon system. Its enhanced reach makes it easier to strike enemy phasefighters, but it is lacking in efficiency and penetration power. I think it is better to replace it with a more generic plasma sword."

"Good suggestion. Any other comments?"

"This is clearly a multipurpose mech that is good at long-ranged bombardment, but probably needs the protection of other friendly units to fend off enemies at close range. We do not necessarily have to address its flaws as long as it can stably work together with other units."

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought.

"Hmm... I am inclined to ignore all of the multipurpose stuff and purely treat it as a ranged gun platform. It is not as if the native aliens are fielding mechs of their own. Their phasefighters hate fighting at point-blank range."

"Do not forget about the cosmopolitans, sir." The Saint Commander warned the patriarch. "Saint Stark has already fought against cosmopolitan mechs. The traitors understand that their erstwhile alien allies are not good at melee mech combat, so they gladly offer their services to the alien fleets."

Multiple Larkinsons scowled when they got reminded of the treachery by humans.

Most cosmopolitans still hadn't woken up and tried to make sense of their situation.

"We do have to guard against cosmopolitan melee mechs, but... not too much." Saint Commander Casella shared her own opinion. "There are not that many cosmopolitan mech pilots in existence. The enemy will struggle to field enough cosmopolitan mechs to defeat my empowered mechs. The previous testing sessions have clearly shown that our enemies must field far greater quantities of strike craft before they have any hope of defeating my troops."

She raised a good point. It was not just the ridiculous amplification that could make the Totori MAXXX a lot harder to defeat at close range. The Command Field also granted Casella the option to control a Commandeered or Enfeoffed mech directly, thereby allowing it to fight with the skills and judgement of a high-ranking mech pilot!

This meant that all of her empowered mechs would be able to fight back much harder than usual!

The weaknesses of this extreme mech design wouldn't be as severe as before.

At the same time, its pronounced strengths would become even more exaggerated after getting empowered by Casella's Command Field!

"When the Totori MAXXX fights under the auspices of the Minerva Mark II, it will practically turn into a heavy artillery mech... that happens to maneuver particularly well in space." Ves concluded.

Was the Totori MAXXX the right fit for the Premier Fleet?