

6851 Second Test of the Minerva Mark II

On the second day, the Larkinsons tested the defenses and mobility of the Minerva Mark II.

The absence of a proper Saint Kingdom massively reduced the Minerva Mark II's ability to resist or evade damage. The lack of strong amplification meant that the machine was less able to resist strong blows by force.

This was why the mech designers made sure to add multiple layers of defense just to make sure the machine could resist enough attacks.

The azure energy shield generator was stronger and more efficient than normal.

The Saint Commander quickly mastered the use of the Battle Skirt System. She was able to rapidly maneuver them into different formations that could cope against energy attacks, kinetic attacks as well as explosive attacks.

The archemetal components were also able to resist powerful attacks without any other forms of assistance.

What impressed everyone a lot was when Casella resonated with Dragon Scales.

The ace mech-grade hyper material proved its worth by making the Minerva's archemetal structure a lot more resistant towards damage.

Attacks that would normally crack or melt the armor all bounced off as soon as the Minerva's mech frame became amplified by a much more targeted form of true

resonance than before!

It was a pity that Dragon Scales could not dramatically amplify the defenses of objects that were already physically tough.

The law of diminishing returns not only applied to the main mech frame, but also the Victrix.

Casella was finally allowed to make active use of the Victrix.

The silvery owl-shaped living fey flew around the Minerva with grace. The Mentalist Crystal embedded within its center bestowed the construct with an ethereal aura that granted it a charm that was difficult to ignore.

The fact that its subordinate spirit consisted of a fusion between the echo of an avian calamity beast and an off-shoot of the Minerva made it a lot stronger and

livelier than normal.

It was not wrong to claim that the Victrix had turned into an avian surrogate of the Minerva!

The Victrix consisted of the same archetech and materials used to make the Minerva. It also enjoyed the protection of a smaller Close-Surface Azure Shield Generator.

Although its overall defenses were weaker than the mech frame it was paired with, the Victrix possessed substantially better mobility.

Under the expert control of the Saint Commander, the Victrix was able to evade incoming attacks with relative ease.

Of course, its evasion performance was not as good as the Dark Zephyr, but it was already impressive that it could come

closer than any other mech that Ves designed.

After conducting thorough tests on the Minerva Mark II's ability to cope with damage, both Ves and Gloriana confirmed that the empirical data did not defy their expectations.

"It is just as we thought, Casella." He said in conclusion. "The absence of a Saint Kingdom is too much of a demerit, and the fact that your mech frame is not optimized for personal combat is another major handicap. At your current level of combat effectiveness, your ace command mech stands no chance against regular ace mechs. Your machine sits in the awkward position where it can easily defeat one or several high-tier expert mechs, but would definitely get trounced by a single ace mech in direct combat."

"...Tell me honestly, sir. Can one of several expert mechs defeat my Minerva Mark II?"

Ves had to think carefully how to answer this question.

"If there are no friendly units nearby, the probability is... considerable. Expert mechs that excel at dueling or eliminating high-value targets will be difficult for you and your Minerva to fight against. I do not anticipate that one expert mech will pose a credible risk to you, but multiple expert mechs that are coordinating perfectly with each other may actually be able to take your machine down. The combination of combat specialization and teamwork is strong enough to overcome the gap in ranks and resonance strength."

The Saint Commander felt disappointed. She knew that it was unfair to compare her personal combat abilities against that

of genuine combat fanatics, but she knew that the cosmos was not generous enough to enable her to fight under ideal conditions most of the time.

It was not difficult for enemies to figure out her weaknesses. If they wanted to eliminate her, they would try to confront her when she had fewer friendly units at her disposal than normal.

It was quite pathetic for an ace mech to fear the possibility of getting confronted by mere expert mechs, but that was an unfortunate reality for Casella and the Minerva.

"Don't feel so bad, Casella. We won't be able to test this out until tomorrow, but as long as you have at least a company of friendly mechs by your side, you can easily Enfeoff them all and let them overwhelm the enemy high-tier expert mechs. So long

as the gap in performance is not too excessive, it is perfectly possible for dozens of weaker machines to overwhelm several genuine high-tier expert mechs."

"..."

Ves may be right, but ace pilots prided themselves in their transcendent strength. Even an ace commander such as Casella found it difficult to stomach all the sacrifices she made in order to empower her subordinates instead.

Just because she made the decision to specialize in commanding troops did not mean she had resolved her conflicting feelings on this matter.

Neither Ves nor anyone else could help her resolve the painful tradeoffs she made. Only Casella herself had to work out a way to come to terms with her development

strategy.

"Although you may not want to acknowledge this, Casella, the reason why we made sure to keep your ace command mech slender is to make it easier for you to outrun your enemies. There is no shame for you to avoid a direct confrontation against individually powerful champions when this is your weakness. We fully expect you to monitor anything within your Command Field that can pose a serious threat against you and move away before letting such enemies get close enough."

The Saint Commander had little choice but to accept this reality. "I understand, sir. I may not like it, but that does not mean that I am intent on repeating my brother's mistake. I will not underestimate serious threats. If an enemy phase lord

wants to pull me into a duel, then I will try to evade rather than fight back. There are other mechs that are much better equipped to handle such challenges. My true adversaries are enemy armies and fleets."

Out of all of the ace mechs of the Larkinson Clan, only the Minerva Mark II was most suited to eliminate a vast amount of regular troops.

Ves would rather have Casella continue to specialize in this direction than try to follow two different development trajectories at the same time.

She should be smart enough to figure this out as well.

"There is one final test we should conduct before we call it a day," Ves said. "We should test the range and influence of the

Victrix. Please keep your Minerva in place and send out your living fey. Be careful not to move it too fast. Once it reached the edge of your Command Field, be careful about moving the Victrix past your domain field. It will either lose direction and hover in place, or it will extend your Command Field into areas that have yet to be covered by your mech frame alone."

Casella smiled. She had been looking forward to this test. There was too much potential in a Victrix that was able to spread her Command Field far outside of the Minerva's usual range.

The Victrix smoothly moved further and further away from the Minerva Mark II.

It took quite a bit of time for the living fey to cross over a hundred kilometers in a short amount of time.

When the Victrix approached the border of the base Command Field, Ves noticed that it only just became clear that the living fey was able to radiate a Command Field as well.

Its qualities were exactly the same, so Ves was not able to attribute this change for other reasons.

The Victrix stopped just before reaching the edge of the Minerva's native Command Field.

"How is it, Casella? Do you feel any pressure?"

"I am not experiencing any pressure at the moment." Casella replied. "The Victrix is still within my domain field. I have attached Eleiha to the living fey to strengthen my control over it. I am curious whether both or just one of them

can move beyond the range of my Command Field."

"Alright. Try it out, but don't force yourself too much."

The Victrix began to move again. It slowly moved out of the Command Field.

From the moment it had completely exited the Minerva Mark II's domain field, Casella let out a painful grunt.

"Are you hurt?!"

No. It's okay. I did not expect this to exert greater strain on myself." Casella spoke as if she just got punched in the face. "This is not sustainable over an extended period of time. I am trying to deduce how I can lower the strain on my willpower."

Ves studied the projected feed that depicted the Victrix. He quickly narrowed his eyes.

"You are not actively resonating with the Victrix anymore." He remarked. "You are treating the living fey as if it is a missile that you have launched instead of an extension of your ace mech. Try your best to actively resonate with the machine."

The Saint Commander had already begun to do so. The Victrix glowed brighter as true resonance amplified its capabilities past anything that could get this close.

Her changed approach produced an effect.

Slowly but surely, a domain field extended from the living fey. Its radius was miniscule compared to the original, but Ves could already see that this was just the start!

So long as Casella was able to overcome the initial barrier, the Victrix should definitely be able to amplify the current

results.

At least that was what Ves assumed.

The Victrix appeared to have moderate difficulty moving further away from the main mech frame.

Its Command Field also struggled to expand further.

"How are you doing, Casella?"

"I am experiencing greater strain than before." She spoke. "I am... not accustomed to it yet. Just as you suspected, the Victrix combined with my companion spirit can act as a remote relay for my Command Field. However, the strain on my mind grows stronger the further I move my living fey away. I think the strain will become more bearable if my resonance strength develops further. I may need to devise a specialized technique as well."

They continued to conduct shallow tests with the Victrix. It was able to move further away at the cost of imposing greater strain on Casella.

It was clear that she was not adequately equipped to let the Victrix roam free outside of her native Command Field.

This at least gave everyone hope that the Victrix would one day be able to move to another side of a star system. In certain cases, this would effectively mean that there were two Minervas in the same battleground!

"How easily will you be able to increase the separation distance of your Victrix?" Ves asked.

"That is difficult to say, but... I think that repetition will gradually make it more bearable." The Saint Commander

cautiously said. "It may turn out that sending out the Victrix is equivalent to exercising a muscle. I have never put myself under this sort of strain in the past. I hope that this means that calling upon this power will get easier over time."

There was no guarantee that this would be the case, but Casella believed that there should still be ways to train this particular capability.

"Has the Mentalist Crystal played an active role?"

"It has. I cannot fully describe its effects, but I can feel that it is actively helping the Victrix and my companion spirit sustain themselves outside of my range. It is also helping to extend the radius of its Command Field, though it doesn't appear to be too large."

The results were ultimately positive, but only mildly. The Victrix had a lot of potential in the future, but right now it was simply not strong enough to separate the two machines.

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