

Live Pitching -3-

Guns pitch reached 151km?

He also passed the live pitching session. I think his talent is good enough for the Korean national league

Chief leader let out a smile after hearing the scout managers report.

then try to scout him in. if we are lucky, his story may become the next big news

Nam Hyun, the scout manager, was a bit hesitant in taking the chief leaders order.

hm well

why, is there a problem?

Player Gun, he himself has let others know that he strives to play in the major league itll cost a fortune to get him in well isnt it your job to negotiate and make compromises on both ends to make it work? We dont pay you a high salary for no reason. Guns not even from the major league, hes from the minor league. Shouldnt this be a breeze to work out?

Nam Hyun let out a sigh and simply nodded.

yeah got to do as Im told thats why I get paid

The salary cap given to him for Gun was \$350,000.

It was a rate that a rookie straight out of high school would be willing to accept.

But Gun was no rookie, he was a 25-year old star dark horse pitcher dreaming of the major league entrance.

There was no way that Gun would accept this offer.

this is going to be very tough

Nam Hyun let out another deep sigh as he left the office.

Nam Hyun stood at Guns doorsteps.

Gun lived in an old apartment located in a newly developed area in Seoul.

It was an apartment that Gun bought from the money he received from entering the contract with his agent 7 years ago.

The planned venue for the meeting was a caf located not far away.

The reason Nam Hyun travelled all this way was to get a brief insight of the players personal life.

seems as though hes not doing too well financially I might have a chance if I talk this out well

Nam Hyun was planning to offer an unusual deal, such as an upfront, one lump sum payment, in order to make the offer more desirable.

Half an hour later, Nam Hyun met up with Gun at the caf.

Player Gun! You look fabulous.

Thank you! Its all because AT telecom has taken good care of me!

Gun had a general idea of why Nam Hyun had approached him.

But he tried to hide this knowledge as much as possible.

Judging from Guns rather positive responses, Nam Hyun decided to be advance hastily with the offer.

Player Gun, Ill be very straight forward here. Would you be interested in continuing your career with us, AT telecom, at all?

Gun lowered his tone and replied.

I will surely never forget the grace and care youve shared with me in a number of different occasions. I will never forget it. But, my heart still belongs in the major league

Nam Hyun was almost expecting to hear this instant rejection. But as the scout leader, he could not back down here.

Player Gun, please do not take any offence in what I am about to say. I mean no disrespect. But lets get real. Next year, you are turning 26. How long are you going to stay in the minor league, getting paid petty sum? You need to think about your family too.

Instead of frowning, Gun let out a small smirk.

Its because of that age that I cannot give up the major league

because of the age? What do you mean? If you let your 20s pass like this, you wont get another opportunity in your 30s. Take this as your last chance.

Gun returned a question back at Nam Hyun,

What would happen if I join the national professional major league? Will I even get a chance of becoming an FA -free agent-?

In the professional baseball league, the requirement of an FA was 9 seasons of career.

Even if Gun started right away next year, he could only get his FA qualification when he is 35.

Nam Hyun could not say anything else.

hes absolutely right theres nothing else I can do about this

After re-organising his thoughts, Nam Hyun continued the conversation.

Player Gun, this isnt all about becoming a FA. You need to think of your career. If you come back to the national league in your 30s, no team will accept you. But right now as of this moment, the story is entirely different. You can easily get six-digit salaries and contract deals. It helps the family RIGHT NOW. Do you understand?

How would Gun not know that?

However, the fear of failure was not going to stop his dream journey towards the major league. As if testing the waters, Gun asked Nam Hyun, if I was to stay in Korea, how much would the down payment be? It was a question out of pure curiosity. Gulp.

Nam Hyun let down a dry gulp. This was the difficult part. Money. I can give you \$300,000 in cash \$300,000 was not a small sum. It was what an average businessman with the average salary of \$30,000 could make in 10 years. But it wasn't a sum big enough to weigh down Gun's dream of the major league.

Player Gun, \$300,000 is not a small amount. It's an amount offered to only 1st round draft picks. Gun dropped his head. That'd be tough. Nam Hyun offered his maximum amount. I will give you \$350,000. I will also think of clearing away the tax. It was true that Gun's been facing a financial downfall in the recent days, but it wasn't so critical that he needed urgent cash. Gun proposed a higher agreement as a means to reject Nam Hyun's offer. I'm not saying this because I play for money. I'm sure you are already aware, but professional players have a high sense of pride. I would have to get at least as much as Player Woo Chul Park who returned to Korea from the major league 5 years ago. Woo Chul Park had 7 wins as a left handed pitcher in the major league and when he returned to the national league, he was offered a down payment of \$800,000. A player who hasn't even entered the major league is offering such an amount this negotiation is over. However, Nam Hyun already knew before that \$350,000 would not be enough. Player Gun, I will go back and have a talk with the chief leader. Can I add one last thing? Nam Hyun raised his eyebrows. yes? In December, Arizona, there will be a show case. If I still haven't found a decent team by then then you'd come back? I'd presume so. Nam Hyun's face brightened. okay. If you do ever return to the national league, then I may be able to give you an offer at around half, if not higher, of Woo Chul Park's contract. Park's down payment was \$800,000, so half of that is \$400,000. This meant that Nam Hyun is promising a contract worth around \$450,000 \$500,000. However, it still didn't change the fact that a contract with AT telecom was towards the more undesirable options in Gun's mind. His goal was the major league, and in order to achieve that, he was willing to accept AAA or AA contracts. However, if he failed to acquire a AA contract, then he would be left with no other option but to return to the national league. Gun's age didn't allow him to participate in the rookie or A league. He let out a deep sigh as he exited the cafe. hmpf am I getting old? Back in the days, I would've rejected meetings like this upfront. I was so determined to avenge Thompson, filled with passion. But here I am now, considering a national league debut. Unlike the old days, Gun was thinking to himself that he was making compromises with the world, and his dream.

Live Pitching -4-

As Guns physical conditions gradually improved, his pitch stats also slowly advanced.

His current stats were

Speed: B+

Control: B-

Movement: C+

Pitch Type 1: four seam fastball: B

Pitch Type 2: slider: C+

Pitch Type 3: change up: C+

Pitch Type 4: knuckle ball: E

O skill: Beasts Blood level 2

Upon examining his stats, there was one category which made him frown, and that was the knuckle ball.

The knuckle ball just wont go up

With the upcoming December Showcase, he was preparing the knuckle ball as his secret weapon.

However, with no signs of improvement, his worries were getting greater day by day.

What was the reason?

Gun lied down on his bed, pondering about this issue.

At that moment, the system reactivated.

Activate the arena for pitch mastering?

The arena?

Gun was puzzled by the systems message.

Whats the arena?

The system replied.

it is a virtual realm which you can enter to practise against virtual opponents

Virtual opponents.

Was it like a simulation program?

Guns already utilised the system to receive a number of benefits. Whatever this arena may be, he was certain it would do him more good than harm.

Alright, Ill use the arena

At that moment, his surroundings blurred into a chaotic mixture of shapes and colours, and rapidly reformed to become a baseball stadium.

the arena formation complete

Gun was familiar with this stadium.

Isnt this the SW park? Park used for AT telecoms 2nddivision?

there is currently only one arena registered

Gun realised that the system could only register venues in which he has practised or played in in real life.

Hm, so its incapable of realising mystical lands or imaginary environments?

Gun threw another question at the system.

How are my physical stats in here?

the arena is purely for obtainment of experience, so any activities here remain exclusive of bodily stat enhancements

It was a place to practise learned skills.

Gun thought that this function of the system was very useful.

If my bodily abilities dont increase in here, then it should also mean that they dont wear down right?

Gun figured that within the arena, he could freely train for as long as he wanted without the limitations of fatigue or hunger.

Alright, lets start!

As he got up on the mound, a number of people appeared around the home plate.

AT telecoms Gil Sung Lee, the batter which Gun last went against, the catcher Gang Han Kim, the referee Shi Hyung Gong.

This is a reanimation of the live pitching session.

As he stretched his shoulders, a glove and a baseball appeared.

Oh wow, this is actually pretty cool

Gun embraced a knuckle ball grip and pitched against Gil Sung.

Lets go! No spin knuckle ball!

The ball swiftly flew by Gil Sung.

The batter did not swing his bat, and the ball simply flew past the catcher.

The pitch control was disastrous.

The catcher hadnt even bothered to catch the ball.

The catcher didnt even raise his mitt, thats going overboard

The control and aim of his knuckle ball needed improvement but it was so horrendous that the catcher would give up on it.

As Gun was raising complaints, a new ball formed within the ball.

Hm

Perhaps the catcher is just for decoration? And hes actually not meant to move?

He wondered if the batter, too, was just a virtual image thats incapable of moving.

To test his theory out, he threw a slow fastball instead of a knuckle ball.

Gil Sung swung his bat against the fastball.

PANG!

Based on the direction and the speed of the hit, it was easily a double-ball is hit far enough that the batter is able to safely run to the second base-.

Gun thought that unlike Gang Han, the catcher, the batter Gil Sung was a proper opponent.

Oh the batter is not too bad at all

Gun thought that Gil Sung was a suitable opponent to train against.

Alright, knuckle balls from now

Gun once against embraced a knuckle ball grip, and pitched while letting out a short, sharp exertion.

It was a virtual reality, he thought that it didnt matter whether he cursed or screamed in this stadium.

The ball hastily made its way towards the home plate, but in a route that was greatly different to the one he had intended.

The ball control was worse than the first pitch.

What the hell? Is my knuckle ball this bad? Damn I swear there is something wrong with this arena.

After spending the next few minutes complaining, Gun threw another knuckle ball.

Repeat until perfection!

Since there were no physical restrictions within the arena, he could pitch as many as he wanted.

However, only about 50% of the balls pitched actually flew towards the catcher.

The rest were either too wide, too close to the batter, or simply fell short of the home plate.

Gun took a short pause as he did not know the root cause of his knuckle ball dilemma.

Its not the arena. Theres something about my knuckle ball that is wrong. I just cant get a good hold of it.

He checked his surroundings.

A big, empty stadium with zero signs of vitality.

Hm I really cant get a good idea of the environment like this

He carefully stepped down from the mound and started wandering about.

It was an attempt to get a direct feel of the atmosphere.

At that moment, he felt a quick sensation against his cheeks.

Wind.

Everything clicked on as soon as he felt the cool breeze of wind.

This must be it!

Hed finally found the reason behind why the aim of his knuckle ball was so unstable.

Thats right! I failed to predict and take into consideration the atmospheric current of the air and the flow and speed of the wind within the stadium.

The knuckle ball that he practised for the duration of 2 years was in an enclosed corridor on the top floor of a state apartment.

In there with no wind, he had maximum control of his pitches.

A knuckle ball mastered within a venue with zero wind.

Any pitch, especially the knuckle ball, practised and mastered in a no-wind zone was good-for-nothing when games took place in open grounds.

Hmph maybe this is why he said the knuckle ball isnt something that can be taught, but discovered.

After stepping down from the mound, Gun focused all his senses on reading the movement, direction and speed of the wind.

The wind is currently blowing from the right to the left

That meant there was a need to pitch leaning towards the right a bit more than usual.

Theres also an ascending current in a day like this, so pitching in a slightly higher course would improve the accuracy

Gun took a deep breath and applied his understandings of the environment to his pitching.

WHOOOSH.

The ball got caught in the wind and fell slightly short, near the catchers knees.

There wasnt a significant difference between his intended aim. At that moment, the system displayed a new message.

Knuckle Ball Rank increase

E - D

Control Rank increase

B- - B

With one simple discovery, both the knuckle ball rank and the rank of his pitch control had both improved.

Gun was amazed once again at the system for its instant response to his both mental and physical findings.

So its possible to increase multiple categories at once

Just as he was about to throw another pitch, the system displayed another message.
The Arena terminating in 1:00 minute-s-
Gun laid down the ball in his hand, puzzled.
Theres a time restriction on this thing?
the restriction of The Arena is 2 hours per day
This was a huge disappointment for Gun.
I was looking forward to unlimited training and practice, free from physical wear downs but I guess thats not exactly the case
Gun was accustomed to relentless training from his previous experiences and therefore regarded an arena with no physical exhaustion as the most ideal training grounds.
But the Arena was not open to unlimited usage.
Gun ended the Arena and turned his head to the clock.
11:21PM.
Time spent in the Arena had applied equally to the reality.
I guess that system doesnt have a function to stop the time from ticking. Well, even if it did, it wouldnt be given to me at least
The next day
Gun left his laptop camera filming, and entered the Arena.
This was to observe his bodily reactions once he was in the Arena, training.
After throwing a few pitches, he immediately commanded the system.
End the Arena.
ending the Arena
Immediately after exiting the Arena, he checked the footage.
What the hell, Im sleeping standing up
As he entered the Arena training, his physical body had entered into a deep slumber.
Hm sleeping standing?!, I wont be able to use this during broad daylight
Gun concluded that the usage of the Arena could only take place right before he went to sleep at nights, or during long trips.