

= Cross Game =

Cross Game ( クロスゲーム , Kurosu G?mu ) is a romantic comedy baseball manga series by Mitsuru Adachi that was serialized by Shogakukan in Weekly Sh?nen Sunday between May 11 , 2005 ( issue 22 / 23 ) and February 17 , 2010 ( issue 12 ) . It is collected in 17 tank?bon volumes , with the final volume published in April 2010 , shortly after the end of the anime series . It received the 54th Shogakukan Manga Award for sh?nen manga in 2009 , and has been praised internationally as quietly brilliant and a great success . The series was adapted as a 50 @-@ episode anime television series that aired on the TV Tokyo network from April 5 , 2009 to March 28 , 2010 . The first episode of the anime , which covers the time frame of the first volume of the manga , received high praise , even outside Japan .

Cross Game is the story of Ko Kitamura and the four neighboring Tsukishima sisters , Ichiyo , Wakaba , Aoba , and Momiji . Wakaba and Ko were born on the same day in the same hospital and are close enough that Wakaba treats Ko as her boyfriend , though nothing is officially declared , while Aoba , one year younger than them , hates how Ko is " taking " her sister away from her . After Wakaba dies , Ko and Aoba slowly grow closer as they strive to fulfill Wakaba 's final dream of seeing them play in the high school baseball championship in Koshien Stadium .

The manga is divided into multiple parts . Part One , which consists of volume one , is a prologue that takes place while the main characters are in elementary school , ending with Wakaba 's death . Part Two starts four years later with Ko in his third year of junior high and continues into the summer of his third year of high school . Part Three continues the story without a break , ending with Ko and Aoba traveling to Koshien .

= = Plot = =

At the start of Part One , Ko Kitamura , son of the owner of Kitamura Sports , lives in the same neighborhood as the batting center run by the Tsukishima family . Due to their proximity and the relationship between their businesses , the Kitamura and Tsukishima families have been close for many years , and their children go back and forth between the two homes . Because Ko and Wakaba are the same age and always together , Aoba is jealous of all the time Ko spends with her older sister . Aoba is a natural pitcher with excellent form , and Ko secretly trains to become as good as she is , even while publicly showing little interest in baseball . Then Wakaba dies in a swimming accident at a summer camp during fifth grade .

Part Two starts with Ko in his third year of junior high , as he continues training in secret . When he enters Seishu High School , he joins the baseball club along with his childhood friends , Akaishi and Nakanishi . However , the interim principal ( the regular principal is on medical leave ) has brought in a new head coach , and he in turn brings in transfer students from other schools as ringers just to play baseball . This team , led by their star , Y?hei Azuma , is the clear favorite of the school . Because the three friends refuse to take evaluation tests to join the first @-@ string team , they are placed on the second @-@ string " portable " team under the former head coach , Maeno , who has to use the Seishu Junior High School field for practice . This causes a rivalry between the two parts of the team . In the first summer practice scrimmage between them , the portable team loses by only a narrow margin .

During the summer vacation , while the first @-@ string team plays in the prefectural qualifying tournament for Koshien , Maeno has the portable team practice at a recently closed elementary school with the support from a mysterious old man . The portable team also has six practice matches with other local high schools , all of which reached semifinals or higher in the regional preliminaries . Near the end of summer vacation , the interim principal decides to dissolve the portable team . However , Coach Maeno asks for a rematch scrimmage with the first @-@ string team , after which the losing team would be dissolved and that coach would leave . The portable team , playing with Aoba , wins a narrow victory . The first @-@ string team is dissolved , and the head coach and the interim principal leave to work at other schools .

In the spring , Ko becomes a second @-@ year student and Aoba enters Seishu High School .

Y?hei , who stays at Seishu despite having been on the former first @-@ string team , moves in with Ko 's family after the first @-@ stringers ' dormitory is closed . The reformed Seishu team goes on to prove themselves by defeating Sann? High School in the first round of the summer prefectural qualifying tournament . However , they lose to their second @-@ round opponents , Ryu? , in overtime , ending Seishu 's hopes of Koshien for the year . Ryu? subsequently reaches Koshien , advances up to the semifinals where they are narrowly beaten . However , Ryu? then goes on to win the spring invitational Koshien tournament later that same year .

As Ko and Aoba enter their summer break , a girl named Akane Takigawa with a striking resemblance to Wakaba moves in next door to Ko . This causes mixed feelings among the various characters , particularly Ko , Aoba , and Akaishi ( who had also liked Wakaba ) . Akane soon becomes friends with Ko and Tsukishimas , and begins working in the Tsukishima cafe . As another year begins , the romantic subplots further solidify when Y?hei expresses an interest in Aoba . Meanwhile , Seishu gains a new assistant coach in the form of Y?hei 's older brother Junpei , after Ichiyo agrees to marry him if Seishu makes it to Koshien .

When the prefectural summer baseball tournament starts , Seishu starts with a dominating shutout against its first @-@ round opponent , Matsunami Municipal High School . In the second round , they face Sena Municipal High School led by Tatsumasa Miki , a former Seishu first @-@ string player , which in the first round defeated the team headed by Seishu 's former head coach . Seishu wins with a nearly perfect game , ending Part Two of the story .

Part Three starts with the prefectural tournament still in progress . After another win by Seishu , Akane is hospitalized due to an unspecified illness . Initially , Akaishi 's play is affected by worrying about Akane 's condition . Ko continues to perform well and promises Akane to go on a date with her if Seishu reaches Koshien . However , Akane 's illness is more severe than expected , and she is scheduled for surgery on the morning of the prefectural final against Ryu? . Before the game begins , Ko tells Aoba he loves her more than anyone , but in such a way she thinks he is lying until after Seishu wins in extra innings , clinching a Koshien berth . In the final chapter , the morning before traveling to Koshien , Akaishi visits Akane recovering in the hospital and Ko and Aoba head for the train station holding hands .

= = Main characters = =

Ko Kitamura ( ??? ? , Kitamura K? ) Voiced by : Miyu Irino

One of the two protagonists , Ko is in fifth grade in Part One and enters Seishu High School early in Part Two . Despite their age in Part One , he and Wakaba are very close and their families treat them as if they are a couple . While he shows little interest in baseball to outsiders , he has practiced daily at the Tsukishima Batting Center in the 60 @-@ mile @-@ per @-@ hour ( 97 km / h ) cage and above since he was old enough to swing a bat . Ko is described by several other characters , including Ichiyo , Yuhei Azuma , and Junpei Azuma , as very like Aoba . In particular , they say the two are both very competitive , and Junpei attributes their frequent squabbling to their similarities . After a sandlot game against Aoba 's team in elementary school , Ko is inspired by her pitching form to become a pitcher himself , and at Wakaba 's urging secretly adopts Aoba 's daily training regimen . Although he does not play baseball in junior high school , Akaishi and Nakanishi convince him to join the high school baseball team . With his changeup pitches , control , and incredible fastball , he becomes the ace pitcher in Seishu High School , as well as a strong hitter . Ko describes himself as having no self @-@ confidence and an excellent liar . Despite being at odds with one another , Ko and Aoba share a deep bond through their love for Wakaba . Ko takes to heart what Aoba has to say and values her opinion more than others .

Aoba Tsukishima ( ?? ?? , Tsukishima Aoba ) Voiced by : Haruka Tomatsu

The other protagonist , Aoba is the third daughter of the Tsukishima family , one year younger than Ko and Wakaba . Aoba is seen as a tomboy by other characters , one who loves baseball very much . Her father has played catch with Aoba since she was little , thus grooming her into a strong pitcher . She has a poster of Ryota Igarashi , a famous fastball pitcher , on her bedroom wall , and when she was young Aoba told Wakaba she was only interested in a guy who could pitch a fastball

over 100 miles per hour ( 160 km / h ) . She has an excellent pitching form , on which Ko based his own form , and she has a wide variety of pitches . Although as a girl she cannot play in official inter @-@ school games , in practice games she plays center field or replaces Ko as pitcher . Many younger members of the Seishu baseball team are inspired by how much effort she puts into baseball and coaching them , and work hard to not disappoint her . Ko claims she is secretly disappointed that she will never be able to pitch in an official game , and Yuhei Azuma points out that she is using Ko as her proxy to get to Koshien .

Aoba is very close to Wakaba in Part One , and according to Ichiyo jealous of how much time Wakaba spends with Ko . She frequently reiterates her intense dislike of Ko throughout the series and often squabbles with him . Despite this , she is very like him in behavior and talents , as several characters comment . After Ko becomes the ace pitcher of Seishu High School , Aoba slowly comes to admit his qualities as a player , and becomes less reluctant to offer advice and even teaches him new breaking pitches . Eventually she admits she has faith in his ability to fulfill Wakaba 's last dream , in which he pitches at Koshien . She is often teased about her similarities with Ko in their behaviors and habits . Her name means " green leaf " or " fresh leaf " .

= = Media = =

= = = Manga = = =

Cross Game was written and illustrated by Mitsuru Adachi and published by Shogakukan . It began serialization on May 11 , 2005 in the sh?nen manga magazine Sh?nen Sunday ( issue 22 / 23 2005 ) , and concluded with the 160th chapter in February 17 , 2010 ( issue 12 2010 ) . The seventeenth and final tank?bon volume is scheduled for release in April 2010 . The series is divided into multiple parts . Part One , " Wakaba 's Season " , consists of volume one , and takes place while the main characters are in elementary school . Part Two , " Aoba 's Season " , covering volumes 2 through 14 , with chapter numbering restarted from 1 , begins four years later with Ko in his third year of junior high school and continues into high school . In October 2008 , the series went on hiatus at the end of Part Two , resuming in March 2009 with the start of Part Three , which is untitled and covers volumes 15 through 17 , with Ko in the summer of his third year of high school .

The series is licensed in France by Editions Tonkam , in Italy by Flashbook Editore , in South Korea by Daiwon C.I. , in Hong Kong by Jonesky , in Taiwan by Chingwin Publishing Group , in Indonesia by Elex Media Komputindo , and in Thailand by Vibulkij Publishing .

In March 2010 , Viz Media confirmed the series licensing in North America . The first volume , collecting the first three tank?bon volumes , was published October 12 , 2010 , with publication on @-@ going .

= = = Anime = = =

Cross Game was adapted as an anime television series produced by SynergySP and directed by Osamu Sekita , with character designs by Yuuji Kond? and music by Kotaro Nakagawa . The series aired on the TV Tokyo network beginning on April 5 , 2009 in the 10 : 00 ? 10 : 30 am slot ; episodes began syndication later in April 2009 on AT @-@ X and other channels in Japan , and finished airing on March 28 , 2010 . The first DVD volume of episodes was released in Japan on July 24 , 2009 , with additional DVDs released monthly .

The opening theme song , " Summer Rain " , was written by Kentar? Kobuchi and sung by Kobukuro . It was released by Warner Music Japan on April 15 , 2009 in both regular and limited edition versions , and peak ranked at # 2 on the Oricon singles chart . The ending theme song for episodes 1 ? 13 , " Heartfelt Dream " ( ??????? , Koi Kogarete Mita Yume ) , was composed and sung by Ayaka and arranged by Shintar? Tokita . It was released as a single by Warner Music Japan in both regular and limited edition versions on April 22 , 2009 , and reached # 6 on the Oricon singles chart . The ending theme for episodes 14 @-@ 26 , " Orange Days " ( ?????Days , Orenji

Days ) by Squarehood , was released as a single by Warner Music Japan on August 5 , 2009 . The ending theme song for episodes 27 @-@ 39 was " Moeruy? na Koi ja naikedo " ( ????????????? ) by Tsuru , which was released as a single on November 11 , 2009 . The ending theme song for episodes 40 @-@ 49 was " Rehearsal " ( ????? , " Rihaiseru " ) by Natsuko Kond? . The final ending theme , for episode 50 , was Loving Maiden ( ????? , Koisuru Otome ) , also by Kond? . Viz began streaming the Cross Game anime in North America in May 2010 .

= = Reception = =

In 2009 , the manga series received the 54th Shogakukan Manga Award for sh?nen manga in Japan . The first volume of the French edition won the Prix Tam @-@ Tam Dlire Manga 2007 . The manga was also used in an academic paper presented at the 2007 conference of the International Research Society for Children 's Literature as an example of telling a story using " silent " scenes ( scenes with no dialogue ) to powerfully convey a message .

The first two volumes of the Japanese edition were described by Anime News Network ( ANN ) as " quietly brilliant " and " the slice @-@ of @-@ life genre at its best " , saying that despite some " storytelling goofs " , there is " no matching the pleasant feelings that come from reading this series . " The French edition was praised by Manga News as a " great success " and " a pure delight as usual , " citing as key ingredients the " appealing and funny characters " put in funny situations , accessible drawing style , and Adachi 's talent for staging baseball scenes ; Adachi was praised for his ability to mix " the sports world which he cherishes so much and the love relationships that are not yet real but so much implied and awaited " and his skill at rendering moving scenes without dialogue . The reviewer noted that while Adachi 's art style has not changed much since Touch , his layouts are cleaner and his action scenes more dynamic than before . Anime Land praised Adachi for his " sense of the elliptical and staging " , the verisimilitude of his stories , appealing secondary characters , and ability to develop comedy in just one panel . The reviewer claimed Adachi 's handling of Wakaba 's death is " remarkable " and that the event " gave real meaning " to the story .

The first episode of the anime series was called the " masterpiece of the new season " by ANN , which also complimented the musical score as " understated but highly effective " . Two reviewers at ANN gave it the highest possible rating , and one said that he would have given it a higher rating if possible . Another praised its " honest and heartfelt storytelling " while saying it would be easy to call the episode 's pacing " almost too @-@ languid " . A fourth reviewer found it to be typical of Adachi anime adaptations , but that the production values were " at best , mediocre and , at times , brushing up against the marginal " .

Chris Beveridge of Mania.com , after viewing the first episode , said the series had " an older feeling to it " because of the rounder character designs reminiscent of those from the 1980s and 1990s , calling it a " great look " with a " wonderful simplicity " and backgrounds " filled with detail " . Beveridge called the animation " solid " , and stated that the series had " a whole lot of potential " , making him excited to see more . He was impressed with the way the events of episode one were handled in the second episode , comparing the pacing and style to that of Kimagure Orange Road , which he stated is one of his favorites series . He especially liked the way the budding romance was shown between Ko and Wakaba back in the elementary school days , and how it affected the current relationship between Ko and Aoba .

Beveridge called the third episode " understated " , moving at a slower pace which helps to begin showing the true nature of several of the characters , and the good pacing continues into the fourth episode where a dynamic between Akaishi , Nakanishi , and Ko is developed . Beveridge praised the character building in the fifth episode , calling the interaction of Ko and Aoba " very charming " and " reminiscent of real childhoods " , with things " starting to fall into place " for the main focus of the series ( high school baseball ) by the end of the sixth episode . He praises the exposition used in the seventh episode , the protective instinct of Ko , Nakanishi , and Akaishi when it comes to Aoba , the use of flashbacks which show how the past is affecting the characters in the present , and the good pacing which " really sets it apart from almost every other sports show " .