

# BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

Note: A lot was lost in translation in this one. My apologies.

Georgie addresses Windy as「ウインディ様」, "Windy-sama." A high honorific in Japanese indicating that she views him in high regard.

---

When you walk through the stadium gates with your ticket in your hand, have you ever felt an indescribable sense of anticipation and excitement envelop you, as if you were stepping onto the threshold of a dream world? Have you ever climbed up the stairs to the bleachers and stepped out into the stands, and the sight of the brightly-sprouting grass green caught your eye, and the field in front of you gave you a dreamy feeling of what to expect?

Yes, the stadium is a magical space where trained professionals show people what they can dream up. Whether it is baseball or football, people have always been intoxicated, excited and cheering for the game. Times have changed, and the professionals have taken on new forms of power. Now, the people of the world are enthralled by the ultimate entertainment brought about by science.

Its name is the "Iron League". It is the strongest professional sport on Earth, contested by special sports robots about two meters tall. These robot players are respectfully referred to as "Iron Leaguers". The "Iron Leaguers".

The sky was as blue as blue can get, and the clear roof of the central stadium was open to that sky.

Today was a pre-season match between the Soccer League's previous year's world champions, Silver Castle and the famous Dark Prince. The stand, which held a hundred thousand people, had no room to stand, and the crowd was enthusiastic about the game being played on the field. It was a good game, with both sides attacking and defending each other, fighting for a point.

Cheers ran through the entire stand. Silver Castle's ace striker, Mach Windy, cut in front of Dark Prince's goal. After dodging one Dark Prince defender after another, Mach Windy ran down the left flank. The moment he drew his mark and feinted to the left, he opened up a course to the right corner of the goal.

"I got it!" The motor on his right leg roared, and as he poised to shoot, a black shadow loomed over him. It was Gold Foot. He was the Dark Prince's ace striker, the supposed forward, and he was coming back to his own goal.

## BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

"I won't let you!" With a roar, a powerful slide forced the ball away. Gold Foot went straight to dribbling and ran off.

"Sh-shoot!" Windy quickly followed suit.

"You're not bad, Gold Foot!"

"I'm not gonna let you take me down!"

"I wouldn't want it any other way!" Windy couldn't help but laugh in amusement. He wasn't a sore loser; it was a joy to be able to compete seriously.

It was safe to say that the Iron League had entered a new era that season. The Iron League, whose biggest calling card had been to destroy opponents through rough play, had regained its lost spirit of sportsmanship and fair play with the breakthrough of Silver Castle, which fought and won fair and square, no matter how hard it was. Mach Windy had played for Dark Prince, but had grown tired of the fighting and had moved to Silver Castle. Windy and Gold Foot had been the two top players in the past, but after that, they became permanent rivals.

"Alright! Come on, go! Oh, my god, they got it back." On the bench of Silver Castle, Ruri Ginjo was both happy and sad about the development of the game. She was only a young girl, but she was a fully-fledged owner.

"Ruri, calm down a bit." Her uncle, Edmund Ginjo, the director, admonished her. He was someone whose thoughts couldn't be ready easily, but he was a bit picky when it comes to Ruri's emotions.

"In a situation like this, the one in a hurry loses."

"Because we're running out of time!"

"And then..."

"And then?"

"It's a draw, under the rules of pre-season matches."

Ruri was disappointed. Her uncle was like this for all things.

Magnum Ace felt that this season would be a really tough one. Dark's individual leaguers were very sharp. Passes were often cut off and counterattacks would come quickly. Marking and checking was tough. He could see how determined they were to reclaim their title.

## BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

When he joined Silver Castle, which had been at the bottom of the pile for years, the team made a miraculous leap forward. For whatever reason, he was the reason why some excellent leaguers joined the team one after another.

The story of how they came together was interesting in its own way. They had a former football leaguer, Bull Armor, a Kendo leaguer, Kiwami Juurouta, a basketball leaguer, Top Joy, and hockey leaguer, GZ. Then, one day Kiai Ryuuken, a Silver Castle old-timer, suddenly realized that he was a karate leaguer. Silver Castle was truly a blossoming collection of different sports leaguers, but they all had something in common: It was the spirit of Iron Leaguers—that they would fight fairly and squarely. That was exactly what made them gather at Silver Castle.

Now, with only a few minutes left in the game, the field was getting hotter and hotter.

A long pass was passed to Magnum Ace. Taking advantage of the perfect opportunity, Magnum fired a shot. That's when he thought the ball would fly into the goal.

"Tatsumaki Formation!" The tornado formation formed in front of Dark's goal, and Magnum's shot was sucked in.

Two leaguers landed from the top of the goal—Gold Arm and Gold Mask, the proud baseball leaguers of the Dark Sports Foundation. The three Gold brothers, including Gold Foot, were beyond the confines of the sport, and they were all bent on defeating the Silver Castle with their own leaguer spirits.

The ball was firmly in Gold Arm's hands.

"I won't let you through the goal as long as I'm guarding it."

Gold Arm looked at Magnum. The two were rivals united by a cause and effect beyond imagination, but that story is for another time. On the other hand, the battle for willpower between the two ace strikers, Windy and Gold Foot, was an intense one that quite literally sparked.

With a flawless dribble, Windy ducked under his foe and bolted for the goal. Foot was reluctant to take the bait and positioned himself for the ball. On the other hand, when Foot was forced to use his power, Windy stopped him with his skill and speed. It was leaguer vs. leaguer, a deadlock of the soul.

However, something unexpected changed the course of the game. When Windy cut in front of the Dark's goal, Foot, who had gone too close to the goal, tangled with Windy and collided with Gold Arm, who had leapt out to grab the ball.

The judges took the foul on Gold Foot from Windy. With a point at stake and little time remaining, it was a desperate situation. On top of that, Gold Arm was unable to move

## BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

his arm due to the damage from the collision. Feeling responsible, Gold Foot offered himself as a replacement keeper for Gold Arm.

"Let me do it!" The two leaguers, who had fought each other before, had a confrontation Silver Castle hadn't considered.

Windy, who had set the ball up, slowly dropped back; a penalty kick had to be anticipated to be stopped. Foot braced himself. Right or left? "Get ready, Gold Foot!" Windy shouted, kicking. Foot didn't move. He was sure Windy would kick it straight at him. The ball was shot into the center of the goal and, with all the strength he could muster, Foot caught it. Windy didn't get it, but it was a reflection of the feelings of the two ace strikers: They would not let the penalty kick decide the game.

Finally, the game went into loss time. The game was a draw with no points.

"A tie? You're kidding me, we're going to win or lose!"

Dark's defender kicked high and clear in the middle. Foot couldn't stay or stand as the ball slowly danced down. If he had time to, he'd take that time to attack the enemy's goal for every meter or millimeter! Gold Foot finally lost his patience and ran out of the goal area and charged into Silver Castle's defense.

"Rrrgh, get out of the way!" Foot pushed away even his fellow leaguers and took the ball as it fell.

Silver's reaction to the fast attack was delayed for a moment, and Foot was free to carry the ball away. It was very fast.

"Gold Foot!" Windy comes charging up behind Foot. "You're not going anywhere!"

*Run, Gold Foot, run!*

*Chase, Windy, chase!*

Two streaks of light rush across the field.

*Windy catches up to Foot and lines up!*

"I got you, Gold Foot!"

Foot didn't care if the joint gears screamed, he blasted the boosters on his heels at once. "Let's go! Hyper Bomb!"

"No!" Windy cried as he lunged for the ball. Windy made a sliding tackle, but fell short. Foot fell down with a crash and saw the ball barely miss the outstretched hand of Bull Armor, piercing the goal.

## BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

The goal whistle was followed by the whistle to end the game, accompanied by a roar of victory from Gold Foot as he thrust his arms to the sky. "I beat Mach Windy!" A pleasant sense of exhaustion permeated his entire body, which was filled with joy. Windy held out his hand.

"Right, you did!"

Foot accepted the hand and stood up. It was a refreshing handshake from one who had fought with all his might.

The film crew of "Iron League News" showed up on the field not long after to record an interview for that night's show. Sports reporter, Georgie Island, was now the show's famous anchor because of her mix-up of public and private life. On that day, of course, she thought she could interview Windy, and the look on her face as she pointed the microphone at Gold Foot smelled of a fake smile.

"In all honesty, we fought each other with all of our strength."

The interview ended without any further commentary. It was the first time Foot had beaten Windy, and he should have been given more time to talk more about his excitement. But after listening to Foot, Georgie's true colors came into play. "Err, now I'd like to go hear Silver Castle's side."

Georgie began to cross the field. A wide, wide league football field, that is. At Silver Castle's side, Ruri was just greeting the players and giving them a hearty thanks for their work.

"Good work, everyone! It's just a game, and it's okay to lose."

Hearing this, Edmond Ginjo laughed.

"What, uncle?"

"It's nothing, I just wouldn't have been able to say something like that this time last season. Well, that's what I thought, at least."

"Uhh, Ruri... owner, yes?" Suddenly, Georgie's microphone was thrust out. Anyone would be shocked to be caught by such surprise. Ruri was no exception, but ever since the team became world champions, she'd been doing almost exclusively interviewing and reporting, except for eating and bathing and sleeping. She was used to television, now, as expected.

She could only smile on the spur of the moment surprise. "Yes, what is it?"

"Today is a pre-season soccer match, but Silver Castle was also entered in the baseball league, right?"

## BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

"Yeah, well.."

"Well, you played baseball and hockey last season with these guys, so what do you plan to do this season?"

"What?"

"They'll each have their own specialized teams, right?"

"Well, no, not really..."

As she answered, Ruri muttered inwardly, wondering where that kind of budget was.

It's true that she had become a world champion, and she had increased her side income from commercials and copyrights and such. But that didn't mean that Silver Castle, whose original management base was a private team, could operate like a large corporation, right? She thought to herself. However, she did not show the slightest hint of such a thought, perhaps because she was the owner of the world champion team.

"After all, all of us at Silver Castle are going to fight as one. That's our tradition." When she finished, she was deeply moved.

*Tradition.* That word made Ruri realize how strange it is to be an owner.

"Right. It's a joy to play as hard as we can, whether it's soccer or baseball." Top Joy spoke after Ruri. "You can come to do anything with your buddies in Silver Castle."

Bull Armor slapped his arm heartily.

"Yeah! Right, GZ?" Windy suddenly turned to him, since he was right next to him, but GZ was at a loss for words. He couldn't say anything clever, so he simply murmured.

"O-of course..."

"A man trains everyday. That's just what he does," Juurouta remarked.

"I'd do anything to continue on with Silver Castle, too."

"Ryuuken... everyone, thank you."

At that moment, Ruri Ginjo was the happiest Iron League owner in the world.

"We fight fair and square in every competition. That's Silver Castle for you."

Despite being in Magnum's words, that was how the whole team felt. Georgie took the microphone and gave a carefree smile. "I'm relieved, because Windy playing baseball and hockey is lovely, too." The whole group was momentarily stunned, and then burst into

## **BEYOND THE SPIRITS OF AN IRON HEART**

S02 E01 - "Against the Wind"

laughter. Among them, only Windy, who didn't know what they were talking about, was scowling.

To be continued...