8 Ways to Lose

written

by

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PART ONE:

THE FOUR

EPISODE 9

In Episode 8…

"Right gentlemen let's do this one by the numbers, nice and easy. This is what we get paid for"

OSN's mercenary force is briefed for battle, The Four prepare and identify their opponent's strengths including JBC's new, notorious contractor.

"He is trained in the old style of Ranger combat, not what we do today, an older form of Saikaku na shi…."

"*Counting down, Battle commences in 10..9..8..7..*" Chance's Heads-Up Display showed him the count as a female electronic voice announced it. *"6..5..4..".*

"I'm gunning right boss?" came Silver's voice over his suit's internal Comms.

"As always mate" replied Chance. *"3..2..".*

"See you at the Gen" said Kaio.

"*One*" came the voice and in an instant all mercenaries deployed at their chosen locations. Chance and Silver immediately headed for the raptor on the right, but with Cage, Dio, Brock and Dahmer spawning there as well it didn't prove as easy as they would have liked.

Chance jumped into the driving seat and even before the protective hood began closing Silver was in the Gunners' turret above. The Raptor sped off toward the base's huge blast door on the left hand side, as behind, a second Raptor carrying Cage and Dio turned off towards the right hand door. At the same time, but at the base's front Deploy-Point five Rangers materialized and immediately sprang off to their specified objectives.

"Ikuzo!" cried Headwire enthusiastically, eager to get out of the confines of the base and into the open air of the battlefield. The front entrance of the base was set out with two smaller blast doors, one on either side of a dividing wall. Kaio and Headwire split from the others, Dante, Knight and Jago and headed to the left side. The door opened for them as they sprinted towards it, letting in bright sunlight and revealing the sand covered terrain ahead. All five of the Rangers passed through their doors almost at the same time. Headwire broke into a boost jump immediately, taking him high and far from the base.

"Wooha!" he shouted, Kaio followed behind him while the other three split off to the right. Ahead and to the left Kaio could see Chance's Raptor speeding up the hill to their objective.

The Raptor kicked up dust as it flew up the hill. Chance was a very experienced Raptor driver and he could immediately assessed that there were no enemies present as he swung round the corner of the cliff and skidded to a stop. Even so, the thought that Silver was covering him from the Raptor turret as he jumped out still brought him comfort.

"All clear" called Silver over the comms as he swung the turret through a full 360-degree search

"Affirmative" Chance replied, "stay frosty" he told the Gunner as much as himself. Reaching the energy Generator Chance ducked low and activated his energy device that would transfer power from his suit to initialise the Gen. He could see from his HUD's (Heads-up-Display) Navmap that at this point his team had secured their near side Generator as had the enemy.

As Chance continued his hack, Kaio and Headwire came sprinting along the mountain pass above him, Kaio reached the end and crouched into a defensive position behind a rock. Headwire continued passed Kaio's position to the edge of the path and then launched into a graceful boost jump, taking him over Silver's Raptor and landing comfortably on the ledge opposite. Two steps and he was in a similar position as his team-mate and covering the crossfire angle towards the main path, up the hill from the enemy's base.

"*You have gained an energy source*" came the automated call over their Comms as Chance completed his hack of the Generator. He quickly headed back to the Raptor, but didn't get in, knowing he would be more effective on foot should any enemy appear, which Chance had to wonder, was a bit over due at this point. Chance switched to the full team Comms channel and inquired

"Objective secure, all quiet. Any resistance encountered?" after a brief silence the voice of Cage replied.

"Affirmative, strong enemy pressure at the stronghold generator. Seven against five".

"Well that explains our lack of action" said Headwire over the Team Comms "let's push up to their forward Deploy".

"Head this isn't a hunt for action." Chance reminded him. Chance thought for a moment, the enemy had denied this flank in exchange for the other.   That would not have been a problem if OSN's attackers weren't also attempting to go that way, now there was no one attacking the enemy base.   On the plus side there was likely to be less people defending it too. A push to the enemy's forward Deploy would allow his sides attackers to bypass the trouble and spawn almost right outside the enemy base.

"Kaio, you and Head push up to their Deploy, if it's clear take it" Chance said and began relaying this information to General McGregor.

"Affirmative" called Kaio

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Headwire set off straight away; boost jumping over the rocks and towards the Deploy, clearly indicated on his HUD's Navmap.   The Deploy was set on some flat ground between two sides of a cliff, on the edge of which Headwire landed. With the briefest of glances around he jumped down the cliff

"All clear" he called over the comms as he landed gracefully.   The Deploy-point had already been hacked by the enemy and as such the geomagnetic energy current flowing through it was a visible blue.   Even before Headwire had begun hacking Kaio was next to him and engaging his hack.

"Smoke screen!" Kaio instructed

Headwire switched to his grenade launcher and released one, which immediately burst and covered them in a dense cloud of grey smoke.   Both Rangers were now hacking the Deploy-point and as such the hack was almost complete.

The danger of hacking an enemy controlled Deploy is that they may spawn at any time, appearing almost instantly in your midst.   That was exactly what began happening now.

They could hear the surging energy rush, and then the top of the deploy point began to spin, heralding the impeding arrival of any number of blue Mercs.

"Their gonna spawn on us!" cried Headwire

"Keep hacking" Kaio said, rather calmly "Eighty-two percent"

The surge of energy rose to a crescendo, energy particles started to form into humanoid shapes as the counter on Kaio's HUD reached ninety-one percent.

"Almost, almost" He called.

He could see the shapes of a Tech and Gunner almost completely formed, he continued his hack undaunted. Headwire on the other hand was fighting the urge to dodge away; at this range any weapon would almost certainly kill a Ranger outright.

With a final surge of energy the Spawn was complete and one blue Tech and one blue Gunner materialized completely, virtually next to the two Rangers.   As they brought their weapons up to blow the Rangers apart, Kaio's HUD read ninety-nine percent.

"Your have gained…" the automated call came but the Rangers didn't stay long enough to listen

"MOVE!" Shouted Kaio

The spawn-point erupted with flame and exploding shotgun shells.   Kaio and Headwire had a good view of it all from their new position on top of the cliff.

"Spawn taken, securing now" Kaio called over comms.

They burst into action as the Gunner and Tech dodged back realizing their targets had moved. Both Rangers aimed their sniper shots at the most dangerous target, the Gunner.

"A Gunner out here?" Headwire questioned.

"Would have seen us from the re-spawn queue and decided to jump in" replied Kaio as he fired his rifle whilst boost jumping over the spawn point. Headwire boost jumped towards the Tech as he fired at the Gunner, already thinking about his next target. Kaio's shot connected directly with the Gunner's chest as he dodged backward, Headwire's shot arrived just a fraction too late and planted itself in the ground where the Gunner had been.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed, almost as an apology.

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The blue Gunner, seeing his range increased, swapped his flamethrower for his rocket launcher, ahead of him Kaio was taking aim. The Gunner dodged to his left as a red sniper trail whistled past. He returned fire with a rocket, but Kaio had already dodged far to his opponents left and was about to fire his third shot.

Headwire landed his jump and had to spring away immediately, as the blue Tech blasted at him with his scatter shot. Tiny bullets scratched against Headwire's armour but he had got far enough away for them to cause little damage. The Tech continued towards Headwire, dodging from left to right and firing load after load of scatter shot at him.

Headwire began returning fire with his rifle at the same time moving backwards and dodging from side to side, staying just out of the shotguns effective range. His opponent was moving well though and two sniper rifle shots flew past him. Both fighters began reloading their weapons.

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Back at the Generator, Chance watched as the generator icon on his HUD's radar turned blue, indicating that the enemy had overpowered the reds and hacked the far right generator. Both sides now controlled two Gens.

"So much for an energy win" thought Chance.

Quickly he surveyed the situation. The enemy would now either commit their main force to defense and as such attempt to recapture their nearest Deploy-point, the one Kaio and Headwire had just taken. Or they would commit to attack and attempt to take the red's nearside Deploy. If that happened it would be a hectic battle for both sides.

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Kaio had out maneuvered his slower opponent and he pulled the trigger even before he landed his dodge. The blue Gunner was caught in the side of the head, the force lifting him from the ground. He landed hard but, as Kaio had expected, did not dematerialise. Kaio sprinted towards the Gunner, as he lay, slightly moving on the ground. As he passed near him he engaged his energy device and removed any remaining energy from the Gunner, forcing him to disengage and respawn elsewhere. There would be no chance of his comrade reviving him. Kaio looked up at the battle between Headwire and the Tech, just in time to see a red sniper shot impact with the Tech.

Behind his helmet Headwire smiled. Although at first he had begun engaging his opponent with Kiso's defensive patterns he had regained his composure and slipped into the third form, Kaijiki. This had given him the edge against his opponent's form one combat style and Head had easily managed to avoid any more damage, when his chance had come to score a hit he had taken it. Now he simply had to finish off his wounded opponent; he replaced his rifle and drew his pistol.

The Tech had other ideas though and using his grenade launcher he began covering the area between him and Headwire with toxic clouds.

"Oh great, gas" Headwire mumbled as he tried to dodge out of reach of the clouds. He fired some speculative shots toward the Tech but the gas clouds were beginning to obscure his opponent.

"I've got him" came Kaio's voice over the comms

"No way, he's mine" Headwire quickly replied

From the side of his visor Headwire could see Kaio begin to take aim at the Tech, with his rifle.   Anxiety began to fill Headwire; at this rate Kaio would steal his kill.   This was too much for the young Ranger as he dodged yet another gas explosion.

"That's it!" he shouted "enough gas!"

Gripping his pistol Headwire took a forward boost jump straight through the gas clouds. Up and towards the Tech, who, upon seeing him began hastily changing to his shotgun.   Not quickly enough though as Headwire bore down on him, only inches away from his opponent's helmet Headwire fired a secondary burst of pistol fire; three bullets tore into the Tech's head.   The kick from the shot almost ripped the gun out of Headwire's hand and it neutralized the Tech immediately. Headwire landed lightly, the other side of the Tech's dematerializing body and looked across at Kaio

"Deploy point secured" said Head.   Despite the helmet Kaio could tell he was smiling.

"Reckless" Kaio said shaking his head.

In EPISODE 10 of
8 WAYS TO LOSE...

"Sniper!"

As OSN push towards the enemy base Kaio and the young Headwire find themselves in the sights of a deadly foe, can they overcome...

"Your gonna need my second shot Kaio…."