

LASTChancePUBLICATIONS

白 武 器 的 知 道 者

written

by

Dave Clark a.k.a Dust

Copyright © 2005 David Clark June 2005

点 火 的 时 候:

知 道 者



episode 21

In Episode 20...

*"This needs to end soon, we have a battle to get to" said
Chance*

Headwire's lengthy duel with Kaio Jr. ended in a draw due to exhaustion after the new Ranger displayed his hybrid dodging style.

The P.O.T permanents fitted their suits while the planet contract Mercs, including The Four, lined up to receive theirs. The suits were coloured green, the colour used predominately to identify Pendragon-Osaka-Tanami Mining Corp rather than the standard blue or red carried by most of the lesser Corps. The suits that all the Mercs wore bore the logo of the Mining Corp that owned them, either on an armoured shoulder pad or chest plate. In this case P.O.T's logo was a lower case "p" and "t" flanking and overlapping an uppercase "O" with the full name underneath in small script. Not the most inventive logo Pro-Pain thought as he finished strapping down his torso carapace, he looked over at the permanent contract Mercs and noticed that not only did their suits display the logo but they also displayed the wearer's nickname.

"Well look at those fancy personalised suits you guys have" he said with a smile, the rest of the Mercs turned to look across.

"La-de-da Mr..." Silver looked close at Hades' suit as if he needed to read the name to identify him "Hadey" he pronounced incorrectly, getting a laugh from the men.

"Yea yea, u contractors are just jealous that the enemy wont be able to identify who you are" Hade said sarcastically.

"Because they can read that when their sniping you from thirty feet away" Chance quipped

"Yea" Bokis said "That's what scopes are for, reading names" all the men laughed aloud.

Headwire and the young Kaio were struggling to put their suits on, their energy drained and their muscles hurting from the duel. Once Headwire had finished he noticed Bokis had found himself a quiet space and was kneeling down in his Ranger suit muttering quietly. Head was intrigued and walked to within earshot, he heard Bokis speaking in the old tongue, what sounded like a prayer. When the Ranger was finished he placed his helmet on and stood up, Headwire decided to approach him.

"What was that you were doing Bokis?"

"I was praying to Zekkari, the legendary Ranger. He will keep my feet quick and my aim true."

"I have not heard of any Ranger doing this before."

"He is not recognised by all Mercs as he should be, but there are those of us who do."

"Can you teach me?" Head asked

"I can" Bokis replied.



The team finished tooling up and waited in the deployment room for the battle to begin. Once all of S.H.C.Ls' team had linked into their re-spawn systems too the countdown began. One minute before anyone, on either side could spawn.

They had been given an overall battle strategy by General Murdoc but it was up to the Captains to designate their troop's specific duties. Hade was the captain for his Corps permanents and also the Mercs it had hired for this battle, with the exception of The Four who were under Chance's direct command being that he also held the rank of Mercenary Captain, although he would take directions from Hade as necessary.

"Rights, here's what we're doing all." Hade began "They've only got one Arti so we are going to make it easy for our attackers to get to their base and back. The shortest route is the caves so I want Silver down there and Chance too if that's cool, having you two down their securing the Deploy and Gen will give us our best shot."

"Agreed" said Chance

"Thanks. Right Kaio and Pro-Pain you two will attack through the bottom."

"Which Kaio?" Asked Firkin

"Hmm, yea that's gonna get confusing on Comms" laughed Pro-Pain

"How about Kaio junior?" joked Sake

"Works for me, ok Kaio Junior?" asked Hade, he got a disgruntled noise of agreement from the young attacker. "Firkin and Sake you're on Defence, thanks for standing in for Digs, Sake."

"No probs"

"That leaves me, Bokis, Headwire and Kaio up top, what you reckon Chance?"

"Sounds good, but leaves you as only Tech up top so you better not get nailed to often or nothing will get hacked." He replied

"Ha, good point. You three Rangers better protect me good." This got a few laughs.

"Thirty seconds" was called over the Comms by an automated voice.

"Lastly, tactics. Like the General said the key to the top is the Deploy-point we are nearer it so we should be able to get there first, I'll take the Raptor with Kaio or Head, the other two get to range and cover us. Firkin and Sake you guys have practiced defensive setups in this base so I'm expecting good defence. That said there are only three Gens out there and whoever gets two is gonna be able to set up a better defence."

"What are their attackers like on this one?" asked Sake

"SHCL are well known for their excellent attacking power so I think we can expect some difficult opponents. That said I do know that their greatest threat, Gex is MIA, missing in action, so we don't have to worry about him and they didn't have very good attackers on this planet before so the question is have they brought any strong permanents to attack."

"10..9..8..7"

"Everyone know what their doing?" Hade checked and received a round of affirmatives.

"Good luck, have fun" he said.



The Deploy-points whirred into life as two Gunners, two Techs and two Rangers spawned at the back of the base. Firkin and Sake sprinted off to the node room to prepare their defensive turrets while Chance and Silver down the steps to the caves. Pro-Pain and Kaio Jr. followed them at a distance, their was no point in attacking now as they did not have the energy to register the Artifact

Above them, at the front of the base Hade and Kaio were already in the Raptor speeding towards the neutral Deploy-point in the middle of the beach area. Bokis and Headwire were sprinting and boosting up the flank covering them.



Hade skidded the Raptor to a stop and both he and Kaio jumped out and landed at the Deploy-point. They engaged their hack immediately.

"Any incoming?" Hade asked

"Negative" replied Bokis who was watching them through his scope.

"We have the lower Deploy, heading to the Gen" called Chance "There is no activity here they must all be up with you." There was a pause over the Comms and then "That means you're facing at least six, possibly eight hostiles."

"Roger that Chance, we are eighty percent complete on our Hack with no sign of the enemy."

At that moment the two men hacking the Deploy heard a noise not unlike a vehicle spawn point firing up.

"What the..." Hade said as he looked over his shoulder. Fifty metres behind them was a bunker and a platform, on that platform there was now a green light hazing in as a vehicle began to spawn.

"There's no vehicle spawn there" The green image took the shape of a Juggernaut, which once formed immediately turned blue as an S.H.C.L Tech jumped into the turret.

"Kuso..." was all Hade managed to say as the Juggernaut fired its cannon at the Deploy-point. Even though Kaio had begun springing away the blast radius still caught him and the two Mercs were taken out instantly, the hack failed at ninety-nine percent. Now they were forced to re-spawn back at the base.

At the same time as the Jugg appeared two SHCL Techs boosted over the bunker the other side of the Deploy and began hacking it and a third Tech moved from his hiding place in the bunker and began placing turrets facing out of the view port towards the Deploy.

"Attack" shouted Bokis.

Headwire reacted quickly and switched to his grenade launcher whilst sprinting towards the Juggernaut.

"Stop them hacking Bokis, I've got the Jugg" said Head

Bokis lined up the Techs as targets whilst moving out of the Juggernauts arc of fire.

"Affirmative"

Headwire arced a smoke grenade high towards the Jugg hoping to blind it. He then produced his Shock Lance and fired off an EM burst toward his target as the cannon turned to face him. The grenade landed directly on the turret and burst, thrusting the Juggernaut into blindness. Head fired another shot at the now burning Jugg as he boost jumped towards it. The Tech inside took his chances, deciding to stay in a blinded, on fire tank and fired the cannon anyway. The shell exploded into the ground where Headwire had been, the blast was enough to shut him down though and he dropped as his shot connected and the tank blew up.

"Chikuso, I'm down," he cursed "So's the Jugg."

"Acknowledged" Bokis replied as he fired a second sniper shot at the enemy Techs killing one. Two more swift shots and the Deploy-point was clear and un-hacked.

"Spawn point clear" Bokis called as he boosted towards it to begin the hack. Immediately he was fired upon by the assault turrets placed in the bunker opposite the Deploy and as he turned to engage them a sniper shot from an unseen Ranger dropped him. Just before he disengaged he saw two Rangers boost jump onto the Deploy, he was just able to read the names on their suits.

"They are hacking the Deploy, and they are Tyrant and Rage" he called over the Comms as he dematerialised.



Hade and Kaio were waiting to re-deploy "They set a trap for us and lay in wait; they must have engineered that vehicle spawn point there. That's illegal damn it, so they didn't just give us the time to recruit so that they could bring in their permanent contractors they also did it so that they could turn the battlefield to their advantage." Hade complained. He patched through to HQ's Comms channel "General Murdoc, I need to report an illegal operation being carried out by SHCL. They have built a VSP by the front Deploy."

"Affirmative, Captain I will get confirmation on that. Proceed as ordered and wait for further info."

"Roger that" he replied.



"Energy Source gained" came the automated confirmation as Chance finished his hack of the lower Generator. Now both sides had one energy, although it wouldn't be long before S.H.C.L hacked the other Gen now that they were dominating up top, Chance thought.

"Doubt we'll see much action down here for a while Silv but I'm not gonna place any turrets to save on energy. We want that Artifact Node online as quickly as possible. I suggest we try not to boost jump either if we can avoid it."

"Ok mate" replied Silver as he kept an eye on S.H.C.L's entrance to the caves and saw his team's attacker begin an advance.



"We are going in" Pro-Pain called over the Comms as he and Kaio Jr. headed for the enemies base entrance from the cave. Their team's energy was only halfway to activating the Node but it would reach there by the time they got that Arti out, Pro figured.

The entrance to the base mirrored P.O.T's base entrance to the caves. There were two holes to enter through, one on each side of a defensive turret that had to be manned to be effective. A few steps and a ledge led to the hole which then needed to be boost jumped through. On the next level the separate holes both led to the same steep flight of stairs, when at the bottom it was impossible to see what was on the next level at the top of the stairs.

Pro and Kaio Jr. reached these without meeting any resistance or turret fire and proceeded to jump through a hole each onto the ground level of S.H.C.Ls' base. Now they were in a room with two exit archways that both led to the same corridor which then ran around both sides of the Node room and had an entrance archway at either end. In the middle of this corridor, up on a raised platform was the back Deploy-point.

Pro decided to go left along the corridor and Kaio Jr. went right. They were moving fast using the speed attack rather than the stealth. As Pro-Pain dodged round the corner and looked down the corridor that led to the open Archway he saw a Gunner at the opposite end who immediately fired a rocket, not at him but at the mines he had placed along the corridor up to where Pro was standing. No Ranger could have avoided shut down when the rocket exploded into one of the mines causing a chain reaction along the corridor and Pro-Pain was immediately dropped.

"I'm down." Pro announced, immediately followed by the same call from Kaio Jr. He had gone the other way and had reached the end corridor only to find the archway blocked by a force-wall, as he had switched to his Shock Lance a Tech had emerged and taken him out with close range Shotgun fire.

They re-spawned at the cave Deploy that Chance had hacked.

"Tight defences" Kaio Jr. said.

"Yes" replied Pro, then on all team Comms he said "Slow and Asuka have also made the party."

"How can you be sure?" asked Kaio Jr.

"That defensive technique that killed me. Only Slow would come up with that, it requires perfect placement of the mines, too close and they blow him or themselves up when they come online, too far apart and I am able to dodge through the blast."

"And Asuka?"

"The best defensive Gunner in the business doesn't go anyway without his partner, one of the best defensive Techs. This isn't going to be a quick as we had hoped."



Above, on the ground level the four Mercs were having a difficult time getting out of their base. From the top Deployment point the base entrance was an open hanger with no cover except an ammo re-supply station on a raised platform in the middle. The hanger ran straight for about fifty yards out onto the beach which also provided no cover.

Due to the proximity of the Deploy-point that S.H.C.L now controlled they were able to re-spawn and return to the front of the base, or at least within view of the front within a matter of seconds. That coupled with the fact that S.H.C.Ls' attackers had decided to make this their route into P.O.T's base now meant that there were four enemy Rangers and two enemy Techs all attacking from the top Deploy-point.

Kaio took down another Tech with his rifle as he dodged to avoid the numerous sniper shots that came in from the enemy Rangers. Bokis and Headwire both engaged a Ranger each and traded shots before getting kills. Hade had little choice but to try to exit the base front and engage the Rangers from a closer range and this generally resulted in two sniper shots to his head. As he dropped he saw the two Techs and two Rangers re-spawn up by the now re-spawned Juggernaut and sprint towards the base entrance again.

"We aren't gonna get out of here, best we can do is hold them off while the attackers get an Arti and go low with it. Least their not bringing the Juggernaut to the front of our base too" He reported.

Just then two of the attacking Rangers boost jumped into the hanger, one using his pistol on the already injured Bokis to finish him off while Headwire was taken down by a sniper shot from the distant Tyrant.

"Two in! Two in!" shouted Headwire as he dropped.

"Roger that" Sake replied from within the Node room. Both attackers went through the teleports that led directly onto a metal walkway above the node itself. The first was blown up immediately by Firkin's land mine placed on the internal teleport and the other Ranger managed only to make some noise with his pistol before Sake's shotgun silenced him.

"All clear" Sake confirmed "Their not S.H.C.Ls' finest attackers from that display. I guess they didn't have time to bring in any big names for that job. Good thing too because with this energy level I can't place any turrets, leaves us a little vulnerable."

"Roger that Sake" replied Hade "Doubt we'll get a Gen off them so you're gonna have to stay sharp"

Just then Hade received an incoming transmission from General Murdoc.

"Captain, I have confirmation on that VSP, it would seem it was there when we did our reconnaissance, it was non-operational and as such overlooked. S.H.C.L must have used the time they gave us to repair it. I trust you and your team can still handle the situation."

"Affirmative Captain, be sure to tell me if there are any other surprises the size of Juggernauts to expect before the battle is over." Replied Hade.



The battle continued along the same lines for some time, the four Mercs up top holding off against superior numbers as best they could, racking up a serious number of kills as they did it. A few more times S.H.C.Ls' attackers got through but the Sake and Firkin were able to deal with them

Down below Pro-Pain and Kaio Jr. had had several attacks fail in the face of the strong defensive paring of S.H.C.L Slow and Asuka, whose job was made a little easier by their team controlling two generators which allowed them to place numerous mines, force-walls and turrets.

After about ten minutes had past, double the time that General Murdoc had predicted the battle would last, the two P.O.T attackers got a brake. They had decided to both go to the left, Slow's side and try to get past his land mine defence. Pro-Pain had gone first and died in an explosion of mines but not before getting a fantastic reaction shot off at his opponent, which took Slow down to ten health. The mines were now clear and Kaio Jr. leapt into action.

He dodged round the corner of the corridor and fired off his entire pistol magazine in the enemy Gunner's general direction, who didn't seem too bothered about putting up a fight and dropped quickly.

"Slow's down, proceeding inside" Kaio Jr. reported as he jumped over the dematerialising gunner. He darted into the node room and towards the node, switching to his Shock Lance he took down the force wall that lay across it. The defensive turrets set up in the room beeped as they picked up the Ranger and began to open up, as did Asuka who was heading over from his original position on the other side.

Kaio Jr. was too quick for any of them to score any real damage on him as he dodged into the node to pick up an Artifact and then dodged out again and sprinted and dodged back down the corridor towards his exit. He was clearly too fast for the hapless Tech he thought, because no shots followed him up the corridor. What he didn't know was that Asuka had willingly disengaged from the battle and was dematerialising behind him.

"I've got an Artifact" Kaio Jr. announced over the Comms as he sprinted down the corridor. Although he didn't say it Headwire cursed when he heard who it was that had the Arti.

"Go low with it Junior." Hade instructed "I repeat, go low."

Kaio Jr. winced at his new nick name but replied "Roger that, proceeding low".

He dodged back round the corner towards the base exit as the enemy Deploy-point finished its routine, leaving Slow and Asuka standing on the platform opposite him. Fully healthed up, they immediately launched towards him. He dodged backwards as fast as he could, just avoiding a rocket blast from the Gunner and sprinted off back down the corridor.

"Hade, they have cut me off, proceeding high, I repeat proceeding high."

"Negative Junior, the enemy controls high, you will not make it." replied Hade

"No choice Capt." Kaio Jr. said as he re-entered the node room. Amid the turret fire he jumped up to the metal walkway that had the teleports on it, destroyed a mine and jumped through.

In the last episode of
6 ways to lose - part 1 - the four.....

The battle concludes, will the Four help their new employers to a win or will the deadly permanent contractors that SHCL rush in prove too strong?

"They've got one; he's out through the Teles!....."