**Arcona Holoball Stadium**

**38ABY**

The Brotherhood’s Holoball league was reaching the end of its latest season. Holoball was a fairly rare pastime in the majority of the galaxy, but was being played with increasing popularity among the Brotherhood’s clans and houses. The Arcona team, once the laughing stock of the league, had turned around since the arrival of Andrelious J. Inahj. Despite the sport’s obscurity, Inahj had played it a little as a child, and was now a key part of the Shadow Clan’s team, usually playing as outside or inside right. He was considered a little old at the age of forty-six, and was also not the fastest player on the team, but his shooting packed a lethal punch, even without the aid of the Force, which had been banned for the last ten seasons amidst mass protests from the Taldryan team.

The finale match would decide the league title – the first time this had ever been the case. Andrelious had missed several matches towards the end of the season due to duties as Rollmaster and a member of the Soulfire Strike Team, or at least that had been the official claim. Some sources believed that the actual reason was due to the fact that Inahj was spending a lot of time with his fiancée Kookimarissia Mimosa. With three matches to go, the team’s management had demanded that the Warlord return at once. In the next two matches, Andrelious scored four times and provided three assists, in fine victories over Naga Sadow and the Rogue teams. The finale match was between Arcona and Odan-Urr. The lightsided house had been a surprise package with the recent defections from other units, and were now led by Sanguinius Tsucyra Entar, the former Arconan centre-half.

The Arconan team were preparing in their dressing room. The side’s manager, Nadrin Erinos Arconae, walked in, flanked by his coaching staff. Nadrin was unusually young to be a manager, but had practically insisted on taking over from his ‘father’ Zandro once he came of age.

“You know what to do out there. We only need a victory to make sure those lightsided bastards don’t get their hands on our trophy. Just make sure you give Andrelious plenty of the ball. And don’t be afraid to go in hard!” the Soulfire leader stated.

---- x ----

As the match kicked off, the two teams tussled for the ball after a long kick from Odan-Urr centre-forward Jonuss Rai. The first attack from the Urrites forced a corner return ball. Sang grinned as he moved forward. He took his usual position at the nearer of the two goalposts. The usual move that had proven successful was drop-kicking the ball into the Entar’s hands, who would then try to throw it onto the ground for a team-mate to tap into the goal. As the ball came in, Sang leapt high in the air to claim it, but the Arconans were ready for the move. Andrelious, back to help with the defence, started to move towards the flying ball, but it was defender Nikola Valtiere who intercepted it, swatting it to Andrelious. The Warlord, though slower than the majority of the team, began to pace towards the relatively undefended Odan-Urr goal, spotting that their ‘keeper, Nathan Deciarus, was backpedalling rapidly having seen the attack go awry.

“To you, Teroch!” Andrelious called, knocking an excellently aimed long-pass right at the young Erinos who played as centre-forward.

Teroch took the ball in his stride, evading a desperate tackle from a defender. With a brief pause, he shot the ball past Deciarus’ outstretched arms. 1-0 to Arcona!

Andrelious smiled and went over to congratulate him team-mate, passing the turncoat Entar on the way.

“I hope you’re ready to lose,” Andrelious teased.

Rai kicked off again, angling the kick so that it would be met by the Urrites’ own inside-right, Rhiann Baenre. Baenre was another new join and one of few females who regularly played in the league, but had proven a useful asset for her team.

Arconan left-full back Adam Bolera sprinted towards the ball, and managed to beat the female to it by a fraction of a second. He volleyed the ball across to Valtiere, who quickly belted it up the arena. Sang was first to the ball, and knocked it back up towards the Arconan end. His kick was a little rushed, however, and the ball rebounded out of bounds on the left hand side.

As the two teams assembled for the return throw, it was Naradas who picked the ball up. His throw was long and flat, and was picked up by Andrelious. The Warlord began to move towards the Odan-Urr end, but was caught by Sang’s defensive partner VanWyck, another who had once been Arconan. VanWyck’s tackle on Inahj was awkward and the ex-Imperial fell to the ground. Foul!

“Foul by #16 VanWyck on #7 Inahj. Free ball to Arcona!” the referee announced, handing the ball to Andrelious. As team captain it was up to him to decide what his team would do with the freeball.

“We’ll kick for position.” Inahj stated. The Arconans lined up, parallel with their captain, whilst the Urrites waited, knowing the kick would likely put them under pressure immediately.

Andrelious elected to belt the ball out of bounds, thus winning a return throw deep in opposition territory. His drop-kick was well-aimed and gave the Shadow Clan team a good chance at scoring a second goal.

Naradas hurled the ball high in the air once both teams had assembled. Again it was Andrelious who picked up the ball. This time he jinked around VanWyck, before firing a low shot into the corner. 2-0 Arcona!

---- x ----

The first half of the match was drawing to a close. After Andrelious had scored, the remainder of the half consisted of little more than the two teams slugging it out in the centre of the arena. Occasionally one side or the other would get through to the defence, but both sides proved a tough nut to crack, even after the two early goals that the Urrites had conceded.

Sang in particular was defending well, disrupting the Arconans moves, tactics he knew well, with firm yet fair tackles, but his own attempts to set up a counter attack were foiled every time.

As the clock hit 50 minutes, the referee blew his whistle. It was half time.

---- x ----

“Keep it up. You got two good goals early on. Don’t expect them to start the second half so sluggishly. Remember they’ve got Sang. We all know how good he can be.” Nadrin declared to the upbeat Arconans.

“Come on, Arconans! Let’s go and finish this!” Teroch yelled, almost preceding his team’s captain out onto the arena.

---- x ----

As soon as Teroch’s kickoff landed in the hands of VanWyck, the Arconans saw that Nadrin’s words were accuate. The Urrites immediately pushed forward with a renewed vigour. The first couple of attacks were fairly standard in nature, and Arcona goalkeeper Troutrooper was able to block the shots effectively. However, the next surge forward was deflected behind by Valtiere, allowing Odan Urr a corner return kick.

A quick drop-kick from Rhiann found Sang’s outstretched hand, and the former Galeres Quaestor knocked the ball to the floor, where Jonuss Rai made no mistake. The score was now 2-1 and the Arconans knew that the early goal would give the lightsiders hope.

Teroch kicked off again, this time sending the ball spiralling high into the air. Inside-left Marrek Gunstinson charged towards the ball, but saw Sang doing so as well. The Arconan realised that he was going to come off second best.

Gunstinson leaped wildly into the air as the Entar caught the ball. His jump allowed him to kick Sang in the chest. Hard. The Urrite dropped the ball, stunned by the sudden attack.

The referee blew his whistle. Without wasting a second he pointed at Marrek, and then at the tunnel. Marrek Gunstinson had been sent off!

“Right. We’ll kick for position.” Sang declared.

The drop-kick from the Guardian sent the ball into the far corner, giving them a returning throw similar to Arcona’s goal earlier in the match.

“Right. Everyone back for this. We know what Sang’s capable of!” Inahj ordered. He marshalled the defence into position with the help of Troutrooper.

Rhiann tossed the ball, attempting to find VanWyck. Valtiere leapt high enough to cut off the pass, knocking the ball back to Troutrooper. The Mon Calamari kicked the ball powerfully forwards, bypassing the majority of players who were still gathered in the vicinity of the Arconan goal.

The ball bounced twice before being picked up by a rapidly sprinting Teroch. The Odan-Urr keeper moved forwards too, and reached out to nick the ball from the young Erinos’ feet. At the last second, Sashar’s son tried to change direction. Then he fell to the ground, Diciarus having fallen for the feint and thus bringing the Arconan forward down.

“Serious foul on #9 Erinos by #1 Diciarus! Penalty shot to Arcona!” the referee commanded. He also pointed the Urrite towards the tunnel – now each side was down to twelve players.

Immediately the Urrites took a player off, sacrificing Kah Manet for reserve keeper Kaayn Salis. Salis had been third choice at Arcona at the start of the season, but had not played a game for either Arcona or Odan-Urr all year. Now he would have to face the fearsome right boot of Teroch Erinos.

Teroch placed the ball on the penalty mark. He had been competing with Andrelious all season for top goalscorer – Inahj had won the award every year since the end of Sashar, but with the Warlord missing a few games, this penalty would make them neck and neck. The young Dark Adept charged towards the ball, stopping a few paces short. Salis dived to the left, and Teroch easily finished the penalty. It was considered by many to be a dirty trick, but the Arconans, even Andrelious, didn’t seem to care as they mobbed the former Consul’s son.

The score was now 3-1, and with just six minutes to play, it was pretty clear where the league was going once again. The Arconans lined up in an extremely defensive formation, easily snuffing out Rai’s kickoff. They passed the ball among themselves, Andrelious and Teroch even playing a game of piggy-in-the-middle with Sang.

After several minutes of irrelevant play, the final whistle sounded. The Arconan team began to celebrate their title victory, whilst the Urrites trudged away.

The trophy was presented to Andrelious. He lofted the coveted item high in the air, whilst saying just two words.

“Arcona Invicta.”