This strategy received the highest number of votes,but don't worry i'll try to explain the other suggestions.

Context:

After winning aginst Bugaboos,Lycaons's next opponent is BlueMars.

But before this Kojima was watching the game between Bugaboos and BlueMars.Suddenly,Johnson and the blocking catcher intersected,as a result both of them are leaving injured.

After watching the replay,Tokuchi figured out that it was a part of the plan,meaning the catcher never cared about "out" or "safe" but he put all of his weight on Johnson's thigh and pretended to tag him,then he springs up and twists his knee,injuring himself.He pretended to be injured to avoid criticism later,and that was the "sure-fire strategy" Tokuchi mentioned to Kojima.

Now the team is studying BlueMars in their lodging house,the interesting part in this session was the knuckle ball performed by Williams(BlueMars Pitcher),so Tokuchi watches it as much as possible.then the coach gives out information and statistics about their opponents.he mentions are the winning statistics of that team.Their overall winning percentage is 0.562,yet when they're playing at their home arena,their winning percentage is 0.772.Tokuchi i called this out because this would mean they wouldn't be able to win even half their games as an away team,which is abnormal.

When everyone else was getting distracted by the drama surrounding the opposing team's new foreign players and their abilites,Tokuchi watched the tapes showing the BlueMars playing After observing them,based on their plays and behavior,he concludes that they're most likely cheating.

Before we explain the strategy,we will see Tokuchi's informationg gathering process:

The Lycaons have 3 matches against BlueMars,they lost the 1st game against the Blue Mars, largely due to Williams and his "miracle knuckleball" that swerves significantly when approaching the batter,making it exceptionally tough to hit.Following that game, the Lycaons feel despondent,convinced they'll never manage to defeat them.All except for Tokuchi who tries to study the opponent.

As the team talks about the mistakes made in the game,Tokuchi inquires of the coach if anyone has ever managed to hit Williams' pitches effectively. The coach replied that there was just one : Takami Itsuki,the talented batter from the Mariners.But this was solely because Williams inexplicably never pitched any knuckleballs to him.This will matter later since it's an important information.Tokuchi then instructs the team to accompany him to an outdoor arena to "practice" and advises fellow batter Tomioka to attempt hitting Tokuchi's pitches while acting as if Tokuchi is Williams.He attempts this, not anticipating much,aware that Tokuchi is limited to throwing

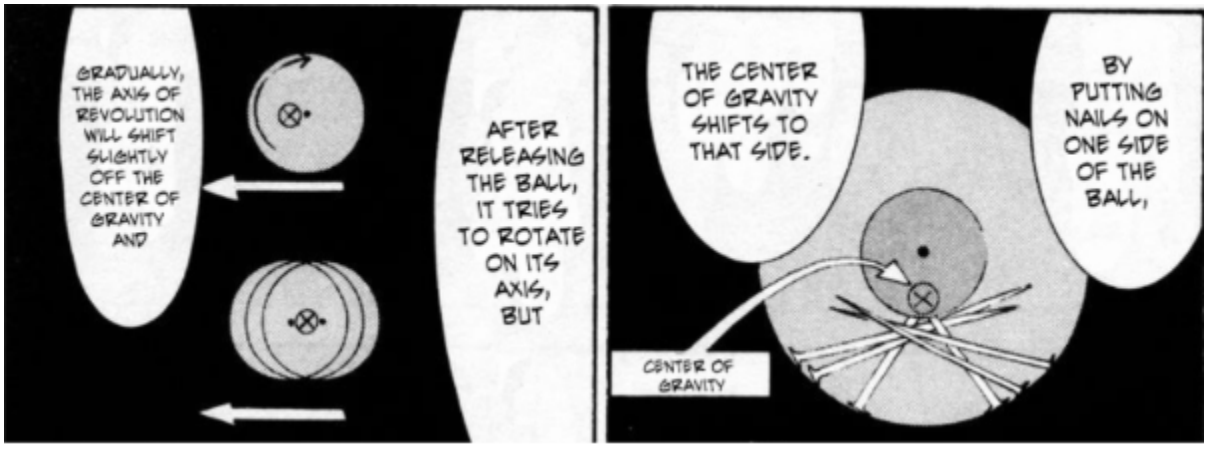
fastballs. However, unexpectedly,when Tokuchi throws,the ball moves similarly to Williams'. Tokuchi clarifies this by stating that Williams truly cannot throw a knuckleball.

Initially,some details regarding the knuckleball are necessary.If the thrown ball is a knuckleball,the ball's extremely low spin causes the seams to determine its directional changes as it nears the batter,leading to swaying during its flight.Nonetheless,this holds true only if the ball does not make a full rotation.

However,what Tokuchi noticed while viewing the Blue Mars' tapes was that,when Williams pitched,he could never make out the seams of the ball during its throw, suggesting that the ball spun too rapidly for the camera to capture the seams,which itself indicated that the ball must have rotated multiple times before arriving at the batter.

This alone wouldn't be sufficient to establish anything about Williams' pitch,but an additional factor led Tokuchi to his conclusion concerning Williams was the crucial information we mentioned earlier.the fact that Williams never pitched a single knuckleball to Takami,even though that seemingly would have been Williams' best choice given Takami's batting record.The sole plausible explanation for this situation must be Takami's extraordinary perception skills.Only he could identify the nature of Williams' mesmerizing knuckleball, which is the reason Williams refrained from throwing it to him. This prompts Tokuchi to determine that Williams' knuckleball has to be a bluff.

In what way could Williams pretend? By placing an object within the ball to modify its center of mass,thus changing its typical rotation upon being thrown.When the ball is spun in this manner,it will attempt to rotate around its own axis; however, over time, the axis of rotation will move to its new center of gravity,leading to the ball swaying.



Tokuchi suspects that the team probably infused water into the ball for this reason,since it's undetectable externally and the water will eventually mix evenly,leaving no evidence. These balls are likely concealed among the team's standard balls,ready to be discreetly exchanged for a regular ball each time Williams pitches.

And this wouldn’t have been revealed when Blue Mars’ catcher throws back to Williams instead,since the catcher can align the ball with the pitcher by centering it with its gravity and then throwing it like a screwball.

Moreover,the opposing team or umpire will never have the opportunity to handle this ball throughout the game.This can occur only when the catcher requests a ball switch or when the batter sends a foul ball to the other team's bench, but the likelihood of this happening is nearly nonexistent because of the way Williams pitches.

Once Tokuchi detailed Williams' cheating,the whole team,apart from Tokuchi,became furious and resolved to invade the rival team's dorms.However,Tokuchi manages to pacify them.He explains to them that,for one,they are unaware of the extent of each Blue Mars player's role in the plan,and for another,resorting to violence may not compel them to speak and could instead draw attention to the Lycaons themselves, allowing Blue Mars to evade consequences for their actions.

The Blue Mars’s choice to throw the magic pitch to everyone except Takami suggests a disdain for the Lycaons,and this viewpoint will persist even if the Lycaons opt to confront the Blue Mars directly.The sole method to alter the Blue Mars’ perspectives is by revealing their dishonesty for all to witness. By revealing this fact,Tokuchi encourages the Lycaons to play seriously against the BlueMars and pay them back twofold.

Strategy:

The 2nd Match begins,Tokuchi had a hunch that Blue Mars had more strategies in mind beyond just Williams’ deceptive pitch,drawing from his earlier insights.This will arise soon.With the game progressing into the second inning,Tokuchi,having gathered sufficient observations,shared with Ideguchi his belief that the Blue Mars continued to cheat by intercepting the Lycaons’ signals.Tokuchi has several reasons to suspect this:

So far, the Lycaons had executed two attempted sacrifice bunts and one attempted steal of a base.And still,each time,the Blue Mars defense succeeded in anticipating them flawlessly.According to Tokuchi,they not only executed challenging plays three times,but they also did so without wasting any moves.

In the last game,at a certain moment close to the finish,the score was even,and although it was tied,Williams was still brought in as a relief pitcher,despite it being a poor decision. This is due to the fact that if the game is tied,having a skilled relief pitcher on the field will heighten the chances of extending the game and causing the pitcher to lose concentration.This implies that the actual reason for replacing Williams must have been because the Blue Mars were aware they were going to win at that moment.

This is probably due to the fact that the Lycaons' pitcher back then was Hasegawa Junpei, a pitcher capable of throwing only straight pitches and curveballs.It would benefit the Blue Mars if they could somehow predict the pitch Hasegawa was about to throw.This was something Tokuchi believed was probably true.In the final inning of the last game, out of all the pitches

thrown by Hasegawa,both of the ones that were hit successfully were straight ones.They lost faith too soon in the curveballs with their odd paths (consider that the batters who connected with these pitches were at the end of the batting order,indicating they were expected to be weak hitters).

Also the batter that Hasegawa walked during that inning allowed the initial two pitches to pass by too quickly,despite the fact that he should have felt pressured to swing since the game was tied and nearing its end.It was obvious that they were all aware of the pitches Hasegawa intended to throw.Side note,he and Ideguchi also understand that due to this,the batter Rodrigo,who is said to have corrected his vulnerability with breaking balls and consistently hit home runs afterward,might be a fraud because of this signal-stealing scheme.

Therefore,Tokuchi and several others must now determine how their signs are being taken.Tokuchi realizes that the BlueMars' fielders cannot act as they wish during the game,so there must be limited methods for conveying the stolen sign to them.However, he doesn't begin looking for the signs right away and fails to prioritize it.This is due to the two scenarios in which the rival may cease to steal their signals.

The initial scenario occurs when the point gap widens.If this occurs,the BlueMars could believe they no longer have to cheat to succeed,and thus they'll cease cheating.This explains why Tokuchi approached the mound to stop it from occurring,as he is the only Lycaons pitcher who doesn't need signals from the catcher and therefore keeps his thoughts concealed.

The second scenario occurs if the Blue Mars discovers that the Lycaons are probing into them.They could cease cheating to avoid being suspected.This is the reason Tokuchi informs Ideguchi that their inquiry needs to remain hidden from the majority of the Lycaons.Since those individuals may struggle to investigate the source of the sign-stealing covertly.

Tokuchi recognizes that looking for cheating is futile when the Lycaons are on defense. This occurs because,when the eavesdropper transmits the signal to his teammate batter, only the catcher might be able to notice what the signal indicates.However,this would hinder his role as a catcher.The Lycaons players can merely wish to uncover the origin of the cheating while on the offensive.

Eventually,Ideguchi can't discover how the signs are taken,goes to Tokuchi and suggests that maybe the BlueMars have ceased their sign theft.Nonetheless,that's acceptable since,as Tokuchi points out,they will simply need to expose the cheating once more.He initially waits for Kojima's turn to bat.Tokuchi's initial action is persuading Mihara to allow Kojima to perform a squeeze play.Kojima performs the action and draws a foul. Nonetheless,because the manager had signaled Kojima for a squeeze play,which is surprising for a power hitter like him, the opposing team will understandably become wary of the Lycaons' intentions and will resend the signs as a precaution.

Then, Tokuchi persuades Mihara to inform Kojima to cease squeeze plays,bolstering him with his own assurance.Thus,he halts.Naturally,the rival team would desire that information,so the

signal has probably been relayed to them once more. Now that Kojima has made a squeeze play attempt,the current pitcher is also cautious about his next move,probably because Mihara didn't provide clear instructions to Kojima when he advised him to "stop squeeze playing."Consequently,he throws only balls for the next three pitches.

The current strike count is 3-1.Tokuchi once more persuades Mihara to have Kojima execute the squeeze play,once again bolstering him with his confidence.Once more, the opposing team,along with the pitcher,would have been eager to learn this,prompting them to steal the manager's sign again.Now that the pitcher is aware of this,he must think about what type of pitch he will throw.Firstly,with the count being 3-1,if the pitcher aims to evade a walk,he must throw within the strike zone now.Secondly,the pitcher cannot throw sliders because they are too simple to bunt.A fastball could have been a solid choice.

The question now is, where precisely will the pitcher deliver his fastball? Given Kojima's intention to perform a squeeze play by keeping his bat in the upper strike zone,the only choice left is to pitch a fastball to the lower region.Thus,his throw will be a low fastball.

Tokuchi foresaw this and talked about the strategy with Kojima ahead of time,and now that Kojima is aware of the pitch coming,hitting the ball for a home run becomes effortless.Since there were already runners on first and third base,the score changed from the BlueMars being ahead by 5 points to only 2 points.With Tokuchi having closed the gap between the teams,the Blue Mars will now,out of desperation,revert to stealing the Lycaons' signs,providing Tokuchi and the others additional opportunities to uncover the source.

Subsequently,Tokuchi and the other players attempting to uncover the source of the cheating converse about its possible origins,at which point Tokuchi discloses that he is formulating a strategy.Arai is the next player up to bat.Tokuchi once more persuades Mihara to instruct Arai to execute a safety bunt to keep perplexing the Blue Mars. Nevertheless,the strategy appears to be ineffective at first because Arai is escaping.But it truly unfolded exactly how Tokuchi intended.

We understand that there isn't a moment when all the Blue Mars players simultaneously focus on the origin of their sign-stealing signal.However,that doesn't automatically imply that it's merely a sign that is always apparent.Although the players don't have to observe it simultaneously,they were typically quite focused on the batter and the ball,rarely directing their attention elsewhere.

However,the point is that this whole inquiry until now has been conducted with the belief that the sign is visual.They haven't thought about the chance that it's auditory.If that were true,the sound would only need to reach the ears of BlueMars,and there wouldn't be a need for them to search anywhere.To discover that sound,Tokuchi uses his knowledge in psychology

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When people hear something surprising,they often instinctively glance at where the sound originated.Tokuchi utilized this tactic by issuing bizarre commands to Kojima and Arai

during their at-bats.That signal,as mentioned earlier,must be communicated to the defenders because of its surprising nature,even if BlueMars had a substantial advantage.

Since the signal has now been sent,the unexpected nature of the signal will undoubtedly alarm the defenders,potentially prompting them to instinctively direct their attention to the origin of the sound,as Tokuchi just described.

It seems that the defenders in this instance excel at controlling their instincts,except for one individual : a player who just made his debut this season.It is reasonable to expect he had minimal to no experience in controlling that instinct.Consequently,he has glanced at the origin of the noise three times so far.From this,Tokuchi was able to identify the source of the sound in the arena : a part of the bleachers.

Thus,we now understand that the sound originates from that area.Nonetheless,Kojima attempts to clarify to Tokuchi that locating the sound will be difficult because,firstly,they have limited opportunities each inning,and secondly,they need to separate it from all the surrounding noises,which is nearly impossible given the numerous sounds produced in that area of the arena.

However,as Tokuchi points out,this is based on the assumption that the sound is emitted abruptly and solely when required.He points out that this cannot be true since the challenge of isolating the sound must also pertain to the other team.From that team's viewpoint,they must attempt to isolate the signal without losing focus,and even in doing so,they cannot be certain of detecting the signal if it is overwhelmed by excessive noise.

Conversely,if the signal was excessively loud,the rival team would also find it simpler to locate.If even a single Blue Mars defender does not get the signal,the cheating tactic loses its value,probably because that defender won't be ready to intercept the ball,and he would be noticeable while playing when contrasted with those who did receive the signal.

Consequently,the sound's quality cannot be like that.What it could be instead is a signal that stays active continuously.The sound usually assumes a neutral tone for other players to perceive,and then,when it’s time to decipher signals,it alters accordingly.What remains for BlueMars is to focus on the change in that noise.Taking this into account,along with their knowledge of the source's position,the investigators reach a definitive conclusion : the bass drummer.

This is later confirmed when Tokuchi again convinces Mihara to let the next batter,Fujita, try a bunt.The researchers observed that each time Mihara indicated,the bass drummer changed the rhythm of his drumming before reverting back to a neutral pattern again. The defenders again reacted suitably to the bunt.Consequently,it was likely the bass drummer that allowed the BlueMars to deceive.

The first layer of the whole strategy focused on merely confusing Blue Mars in order to score points against them and find out how they cheated,using Kojima Bunts.

Now it’s Ideguchi’s chance to hit.Tokuchi has a plan that again requires persuading Mihara to provide the batter with a specific signal.However,this time,since the last two batters were out due to Mihara following Tokuchi's advice,Mihara will ignore him from now on.However,regarding Mihara's actions,he mentions that since it’s the eighth inning, he has “only six outs remaining.”

Tokuchi observes Mihara’s unusual phrasing and inquires with the Saikawa Corporation’s public relations chief,Mitsuo Oikawa,about the situation.Oikawa discloses that after the match against the Bugaboos,where Mihara first disregarded Saikawa's orders,Saikawa threatened to halve Mihara's annual salary if he didn’t secure victories in at least two of the Lycaons’ three matches against the Blue Mars.

Due to the information Tokuchi received,he understands how to persuade Mihara to side with him.As Ideguchi buys time for them,Tokuchi takes Mihara to the locker room to converse,where Tokuchi explains that Mihara’s refusal to listen to him is likely due to Mihara's lack of belief in his own self-confidence.Thus,Tokuchi concludes that a demonstration is necessary.He tosses 50 million yen onto the ground in front of Mihara and proposes a deal to him.

If Mihara listens to Tokuchi for the next two matches and they win both matches,Mihara will receive 10 million from Tokuchi's funds.Otherwise,Mihara retains the entire 50 million. In Mihara’s view,it's a favorable situation,as accepting the deal guarantees him profit regardless of the outcome of the next two matches.Thus,he accepts the offer.In truth, Tokuchi never stressed about needing to give Mihara over 10 million.The additional 40 million he proposed wasn't due to his desire to give it to Mihara,it was solely because that amount would be sufficient to persuade Mihara to accept the offer,nothing more.

Mihara now agrees with everything Tokuchi suggests.Ideguchi is the next batter,and as he steps up to the plate,Mihara signals him to bunt.Kojima informs Tokuchi that the adversaries may no longer adopt an anti-bunt position,since the Lycaons have executed it twice previously,and on both occasions it appeared unnatural,leading BlueMars to be cautious by now.However,Tokuchi counters this by stating that in both prior instances, although it was an unnatural choice for the Lycaons,the BlueMars successfully got both batters out,which leads them to believe that taking an anti-bunt approach remains their optimal strategy.

Now, Tokuchi’s next layer is set in motion.During Ideguchi's at-bat,as previously mentioned,Mihara signals him to perform a safety bunt.However,Ideguchi isn't going to attempt a sacrifice bunt.Since Tokuchi informed him in advance to instead,while the rival team anticipates Ideguchi to bunt because of their own sign-stealing,swing normally. And that’s precisely what occurs,Ideguchi pretends to bunt before hitting the ball conventionally,allowing him to reach first base successfully.

Upon reaching first base, Ideguchi notices that the upcoming batter received the signal for a sacrifice bunt.Tokuchi had earlier mentioned that his plan for after Ideguchi reached first base was to keep allowing the Blue Mars to steal their signs for the time being.

Ideguchi is worried about these two factors.How are they planning to trick the opposing team in this manner? Since the Blue Mars will utilize the anti-bunt positioning to swiftly dismiss Ideguchi instead of the batter,Ideguchi concludes that his best move is to steal second base during the pitch.

He goes ahead with that,but it turns out that when the ball is pitched,the batter does not attempt to bunt.Rather,he strikes the bat as usual,sending it into the outfield,thereby turning the whole situation into a hit-and-run play.Consequently,Ideguchi reaches third base while the other player advances to first base.

The upcoming hitter is Nishimura.This time,Mihara signals Ideguchi to attempt to steal home.However,the reality is that stealing home in baseball is quite challenging.Even if Ideguchi matched Johnson's speed, attempting to steal home wouldn't make sense now, as the opposing team's sign-stealing has enabled them to get ready for it.

However, he also understands that Ideguchi's team stands to gain nothing if he refrains from attempting to steal home.This contrasts with a situation where a runner is on base, and the manager signals the batter to execute a sacrifice bunt.That signal demands the batter and runner to work together for success.If the runner ignores the sign,the plan would've been pointless,and the Lycaons would've merely gained an extra out without anything else from it.However,this time,the signal does not necessitate Ideguchi's cooperation.He can stay on third base if he wishes without the team facing any major repercussions.

Nonetheless, Ideguchi resolves to feign an attempt to steal a base simply to evade Tokuchi's scrutiny afterward,since he could then claim, "sorry, I attempted to steal home but was unsuccessful." In the initial pitch to Nishimura, Ideguchi sprints toward home before quickly running back.He returns safely, but something different is occurring.

As Ideguchi tried to steal home, the hitter who reached first base began his attempt to take second base. As the third base defender, who now possesses the ball after attempting to prevent Ideguchi from going back to third base, throws it to the second baseman in an effort to get the other batter out, the second baseman does not catch it because he is too preoccupied with Ideguchi to reach second base and secure the ball promptly. Consequently, the ball goes back to the outfield, and Ideguchi successfully scores a run while the batter who stole second also reaches third base.

Once Ideguchi returns home,he's quite confused by the entire situation as the other runner on base twice appeared to be making independent decisions.Tokuchi clarifies that,to begin with,he did not share the strategy with anyone else.While Ideguchi stood on first base,he communicated a note to all the other players,excluding Mihara,stating that they would now implement sign pattern 2 rather than 1. Varied sign patterns indicate that a sign used in pattern 1 carries one meaning, whereas the identical sign in pattern 2 conveys a different meaning. Now that the players are aware of the pattern change while Mihara remains unaware, it implies that when Mihara signals from pattern 1, the batter will perceive it as a signal from pattern 2.

This initially took place when Ideguchi stood on first base.The batter following him received the indication from Mihara to perform a sacrifice bunt, but in pattern 2, that indication signifies a standard hit. Since it's Mihara's signals that the Blue Mars are pilfering, they'll be tricked into believing the hitter is about to execute a sacrifice bunt. This difference allows the batter to achieve a hit into the outfield because of Blue Mars' anti-bunt stance, effectively moving himself and Ideguchi closer to home.

The following instance when Tokuchi's strategy took effect was when Ideguchi occupied third base.The signal Mihara displayed here was "steal home" based on pattern 1. However, based on pattern 2, the indication is "steal second base." Consequently, the Blue Mars were so concentrated on Ideguchi that they failed to realize the runner on first base was stealing home, which ultimately led to a run for the Lycaons and the batter following Ideguchi reaching third base.

Tokuchi's strategy seems to have several weaknesses.Primarily, this approach depended significantly on the choices Ideguchi made throughout the inning. For instance, what if Ideguchi genuinely attempted to steal home? Tokuchi was sure that he would not.,meaning he predicted his exact thought process and chain of reasoning during his gameplay,based on his profiling of someone like Ideguchi. He was certain about every choice Ideguchi made during that inning.Upon reaching first base and observing Mihara signaling the upcoming batter to execute a sacrifice bunt, Tokuchi predicted that Ideguchi, characterized as "a professional catcher with a completely typical sense of duty," would naturally recognize the peril he was in and would try to steal a base.

And when Ideguchi reached third base, he, again, assuming he is entirely rational, would clearly recognize the impracticality of attempting to steal home as directed. And then, while reflecting on it,he would come to understand that he is not obliged to follow the directives since,as mentioned before,nothing significantly negative will occur if he does not.Ideguchi would have felt guilty about disregarding Tokuchi's commands, so he would at least feign stealing the base before returning.Luckily for Tokuchi, he was correct about Ideguchi being an entirely typical rational individual, and so everything unfolded precisely as he had anticipated.

it seems that the BlueMars will understand that the Lycaons have changed patterns and adapt accordingly.However, Tokuchi ensured that it wouldn't occur, at least for the time being. This is because all aspects of the strategy outlined up to this point have had a different function than previously mentioned, and that function is disguise.

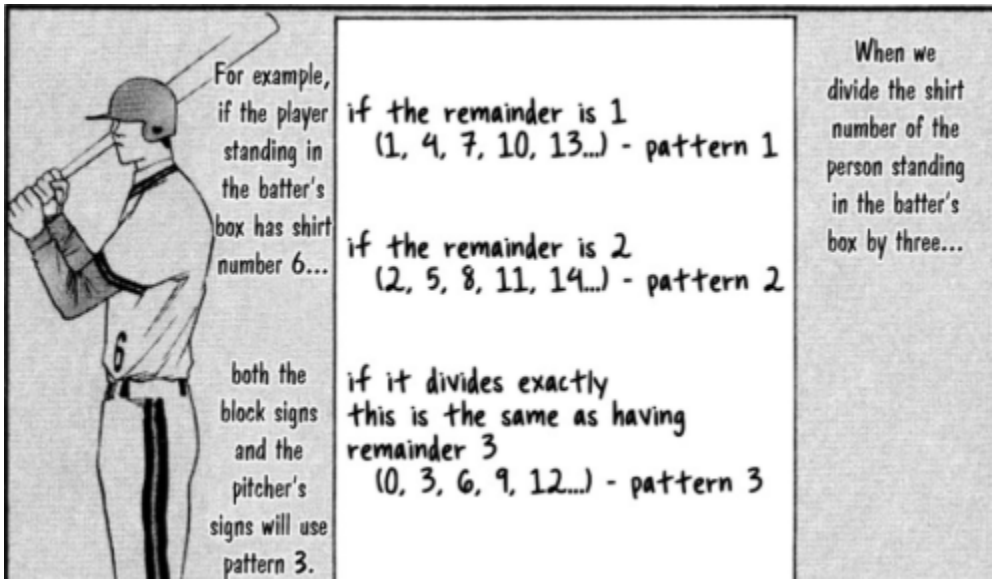
When Ideguchi occupied first base, Mihara signaled the next batter for a sacrifice bunt as mentioned earlier. But how would this approach appear to the BlueMars after the batter struck the ball in the usual manner? If the batter struck the ball as usual, it indicates that the signal Mihara provided wasn't actually a "sacrifice bunt" indication. However, they must have altered their patterns, and the signal was indeed a "hitting" signal, correct? That could have been what the Blue Mars believed if Ideguchi hadn't attempted to swipe second base. This, along with the unexpected hit from the other batter, caused the entire strategy to appear as a hit-and-run play rather than just a hit or a sacrifice bunt, which Mihara's sign does not indicate in either scenario.

While Ideguchi occupied third base, the Blue Mars thought Mihara indicated the signal to attempt stealing home.However, what they failed to realize was that the hitter following Ideguchi would also attempt to steal a base. All these elements together would cause the Blue Mars to perceive that the Lycaons' approach in this instance was neither “stealing home” based on pattern 1 nor “stealing second base” according to pattern 2, but rather a completely different strategy that doesn’t fit either pattern,a double steal.

So basically Tokuchi analyzed the sign patterns of the Lycaons and devised a strategy according to the meanings of the signs within each pattern.His plan was to mislead the BlueMars by having Mihara and Ideguchi employ sign pattern 1, while making the other players believe they were utilizing sign pattern 2. This led to the Lycaons performing acts that matched a nonexistent sign pattern. As a result, the opposing team believes that the Lycaons are employing a novel sign pattern unfamiliar to them, baffling them just long enough for the Lycaons to capitalize on this and secure victory in the game.

Tokuchi could only execute this strategy by understanding Ideguchi's thoughts and decisions at each stage, and ultimately, it was rewarding.

Now with the 3rd match, just prior to the beginning of this match, Ideguchi suggests a plan to combat the opposing team’s sign-stealing. At present, his team has three distinct sign patterns. Ideguchi recommends beginning with pattern 1 in the first inning, and then rotating through all the patterns for each inning during the game. However, as Tokuchi emphasizes, it likely won't succeed, as numerous teams already employ this tactic, making it relatively easy to identify. As a result, Tokuchi suggests a different approach that entails having the sign pattern determined by the number on the back of the batter’s jersey as shown below:



This approach won’t pose an issue even if the figure is a large one, such as 82, since there is a unique mathematical technique Tokuchi demonstrates that indicates the remainder of a number

matches the remainder of the digits' sum of that number. The approach can be applied in both offensive and defensive situations. Due to this approach, the team is anticipated to alter their signaling patterns roughly fifty times throughout the game, which implies that the opposing team will have little opportunity to recognize any specific signaling pattern in use. It will be particularly difficult to identify because the sign-pattern will change inconsistently.

To enhance the reliability of this strategy, Tokuchi suggests that the team should implement it after the fourth inning. If they begin the match with their usual sign-pattern approach, then by the fourth inning, when the opponent’s batting order repeats, these hitters, having adjusted to the Lycaons’ pitches, will expect the Lycaons to maintain their strategy until the game concludes, at which point Tokuchi’s tactic will catch them off guard. In general, this approach could have effectively countered the base-drummer they encountered in the last match, were it not for the existence of another aspect of Blue Mars’ cheating that remained undiscovered.

When the fourth inning starts, Tokuchi's approach appears ineffective. Every opposing player continues to react favorably to the Lycaons’ maneuvers. The Lycaons believe it's due to having accidentally repeated the same pattern excessively, so they attempt to vary their sign-patterns more often because of this, yet the Blue Mars consistently figure them out. At one moment, Kojima fears that maybe Tokuchi’s initial strategy was destined to fail,because they use hidden cameras to catch Ideguchi's singals, but they don't know the meaning of it, so they compare it to the previous pitchese to translate it.

As a result, Kojima recommends altering sign patterns prior to each pitch. Yet, as Tokuchi notes, although Kojima’s statement might hold true, it appears improbable since earlier in the inning, Blue Mars' batter Arikawa successfully hit the first pitch even after the Lycaons had altered their strategy by that time. If Kojima's statement is accurate, and the Blue Mars can only adjust after two or three pitches, then how can Arikawa make this move? Nonetheless, Tokuchi concurs with Kojima's suggestion to modify the strategy for the time being. From this point forward, the pattern will be determined by the total strike counts instead.

Nonetheless, the BlueMars continue to gain popularity. This brings Tokuchi to one clear conclusion that might clarify the situation : they’re being monitored. When Tokuchi initially informs Kojima of this, Kojima becomes anxious, but Tokuchi promptly advises him to relax and behave casually, as the opposing team could observe. He further explains that it's during moments of calm thinking that certain aspects of the bugging naturally come to light. To start, how many individuals are tuned in? Tokuchi points out that signs move quickly throughout a baseball game. Those taking the signs must act quickly to analyze the sign using the information gathered from the opposing team's bench. For instance, when the catcher of the opposing team gives a signal to the pitcher, it won't take long before the pitcher executes that signal. Due to this, a large crowd would merely be an obstacle, resulting in the inference that there’s likely only one or two individuals eavesdropping at any given moment.

Next, it's important to recognize that people will find it challenging to perceive multiple sounds simultaneously. This, along with the fact that there are likely not more than two listeners simultaneously, suggests that there are probably not more than two listening devices as well.

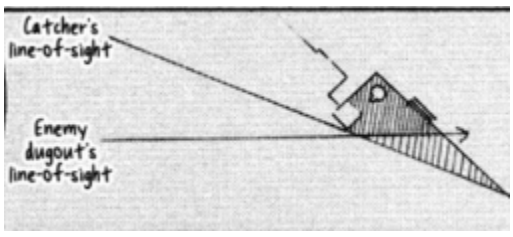
Kojima subsequently inquires of Tokuchi how that could be achieved by providing an example. If the audio device were inside the meeting room, how could it possibly capture any voices if the room contained the whole team of around 30 individuals? Ultimately, their voices would overwhelm one another. It becomes particularly problematic if the space is large, such as a conference room. This is relevant to the dugout as well.

However, as Tokuchi points out, this occurs only when no significant topics are being addressed. Otherwise, everyone would remain silent, paying attention to the individual who had something significant to share. But how did the Blue Mars come to know all the instances when they altered their strategy during the game? This would suggest that at least one of their listening devices is likely in the dugout.

Why would it be specifically in the dugout? Information is shared among team members through various methods, some more subtle than in a meeting room where only one person speaks. However, as Tokuchi emphasizes, all those approaches share a commonality, the information relayed must go through manager Mihara at some stage.

If this were accurate, it implies they wouldn't need to employ cumbersome techniques to capture the voices of unknown individuals when a single device could simply record the sounds nearby Mihara. This would clarify why the Blue Mars consistently detected the changes in sign patterns and strategies of the Lycaons.

Yet in that scenario, how could they monitor a living individual on the move if they hadn't installed a device in the manager's outfit? The response that Tokuchi offers is rather straightforward. The manager, as the manager, won’t be very mobile. He'd prefer to dedicate his time to watching the game, and shifting around simply isn't needed for that. Moreover, there is a specific spot in the dugout where the manager, or any manager for that matter, would rather be than anywhere else throughout the game. And that is the section of the dugout that has a bat storage from the exterior. The main reason for this is that the opposing team cannot perceive the signals the manager emits from that location. The listening device has probably just been installed in that location.



Once Tokuchi shares this information, Kojima gets enraged, declaring he will search for the device right away. However, Tokuchi intervenes, pointing out that, firstly, the opposing team must have concealed it very effectively to prevent cheating accusations, and secondly, the game continues while Kojima is looking for the device. The most they can manage is to proceed according to the information they possess at present. In this situation, it would entail relocating Mihara from his present role.

Nonetheless, the Blue Mars seem to still somehow detect Mihara's voice. As Tokuchi instructs Mihara to alter the sign pattern once more from its former state, he relaxes and watches his environment. That's when he realizes Mihara's voice is, in fact, being intercepted.

Having found it, Tokuchi exits to the arena to summon Ideguchi, and in the process, he "accidentally" tips over a box containing practice balls, causing the arena's ball boys to retrieve the balls, halting the game. While doing this, Tokuchi summons Ideguchi and the other team members to assemble with him in the dugout. He states that a new sign-pattern alteration has been chosen, entirely unlike the ones they have used before. As the game progresses, the Lycaons are in a defensive position with no outs. However, this time, remarkably, all three batters are struck out, despite Tokuchi communicating the strategy change directly to Mihara, whom he suspects is under surveillance.

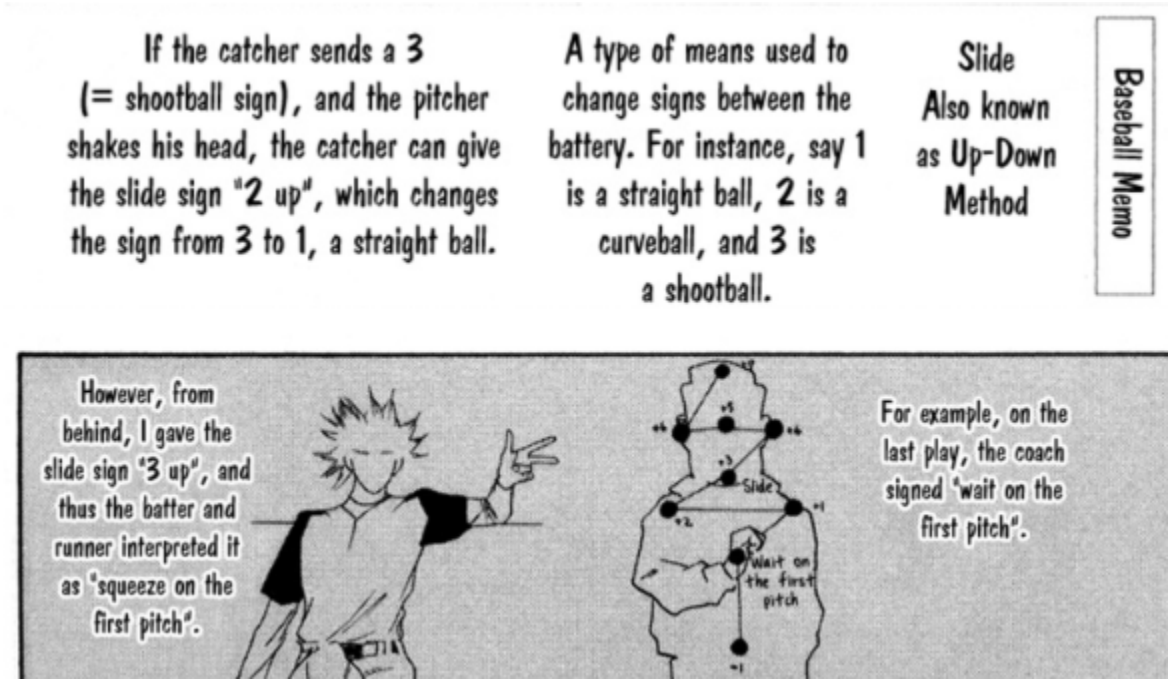
The reason Tokuchi did all this was that he noticed the ball boys loitering and squatting just outside the section of the dugout where Mihara stood, feigning to do chores when, in fact, there was nothing significant to be done at that moment. Furthermore, the aspect of Mihara remaining in a corner of the dugout to stay hidden is that there consistently exists a cluster of individuals nearby Mihara during that period, and that group is, once more, the ball boys. Considering this, they likely possess a concealed microphone that enables them to capture Mihara's voice while he is in motion.

He knocked over the ball box to deliberately remove the ball boys from the dugout, allowing him to privately announce the next strategy to his team for the first time. As the ball boys were absent at that time, they were unable to hear their conversation and therefore couldn't pass the information to the other team. For the first time, the Blue Mars were unaware of the other team's next move.

Kojima gets angry again after hearing this, stating that he will approach the ball boys and pull their mics away from them. And once more, Tokuchi manages to soothe him. He clarifies that the ball boys will not easily give up the devices, and furthermore, even if they do, there's no evidence linking Blue Mars to the situation. Additionally, their team was currently trailing by seven points. What if they had the ball boys work together with them instead?

The cooperation would unfold as follows: when the Lycaons launch their attack, the manager will emit a signal to the batter. Nonetheless, Tokuchi distributed a letter to every batter except for Mihara in advance. The letter, purportedly authored by Mihara, indicates that the batters are to,

based on Mihara's signal, slide in response to the signs Tokuchi gives from the dugout to receive the actual signal. This ought to keep Blue Mars grounded given their reliance on the sounds surrounding Mihara.



The approach is successful at the outset. The Lycaons successfully increased their score, putting them just 2 points away.

Nonetheless, the Blue Mars coach Shirooka ultimately realizes what Tokuchi and his team are up to, and chooses to cease employing tricks against them. In the final inning, as the Lycaons are on the offense, the BlueMars replace their pitcher with Williams. The members of the Lycaons come to a realization. Knowing how Williams' knuckleball functions doesn't equate to successfully overcoming it. Nonetheless, Tokuchi devised a strategy anyway. The upcoming batter facing Williams is Kojima. While Williams is throwing to Kojima, he throws only knuckleballs at first. However, due to the lack of precision in those pitches, the strike count ultimately reaches 1-2, while Kojima hasn't even tried to hit the ball yet.

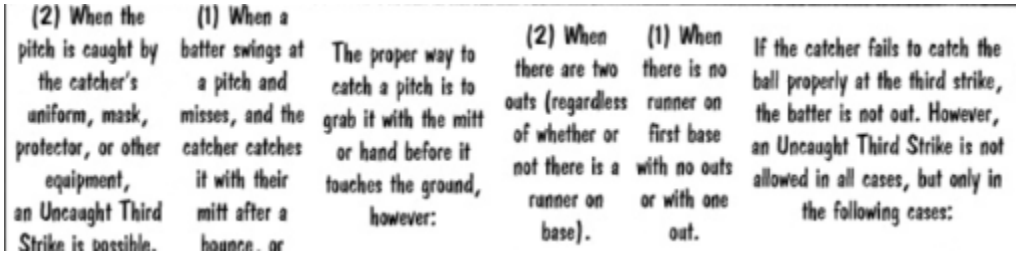
At present, it appears to everyone that Kojima is anticipating a direct pitch since he seems to have abandoned attempting to hit the knuckleball or even Williams' sinker, which initially resembles a knuckleball. Therefore, keeping this in consideration, the catcher chooses to give Williams the signal to throw an easy ball. However, given that the strike count stands at 1-2, it ought to be a pivotal pitch that elevates the count to 2-2. Consequently, Williams ought to throw a sinker. Thus, that's what he does and...Kojima strikes. He hits a home run and adds another run for the Lycaons. The current score stands at 7-6.

Tokuchi discovered a method to determine what pitch Williams would throw even before the pitcher grasped the ball. As he disclosed in a previous chapter, the Blue Mars require a method to conceal the knuckleball when it's not in use to prevent being detected for cheating. Logically, the person concealing the ball should be the catcher rather than the pitcher, as the catcher's gear provides numerous places to conceal it. If the catcher desires Williams to deliver a knuckleball, he will throw the modified ball to him for the upcoming pitch. Otherwise, he will toss an ordinary ball. After the catcher pitches a ball, he hides the other ball somewhere on his person.

However, there is a method to discern which ball the catcher pitches. If the catcher wants Williams to throw a knuckleball, he will use the modified ball; however, because of the ball's characteristics, the catcher must hold and release it in a specific manner to stop it from wobbling excessively as it returns to the pitcher.

However, modifying the grip so that it feels perfect before throwing requires time, unlike when the catcher tosses a standard ball, as the grip is not significant then. Kojima, while at-bat, timed his swing for when the catcher would deliver the standard pitch and then confidently anticipated a sinker on the next throw before making contact. Everything aligns with what Tokuchi anticipated.

The upcoming hitter is Tokuchi who, as he states, isn't able to hit, but can at least foul. Nonetheless, he managed to reach first base. In what way? Initially, he entices Williams to throw two fastballs to swiftly accumulate two strikes. Subsequently, every pitch thrown by Williams is fouled off by Tokuchi. Ultimately, the pitcher and catcher grow tired of his foul balls, leading the catcher to toss the altered ball to Williams, which Tokuchi understands for the reasons mentioned. Tokuchi anticipates that Williams will pitch a knuckleball, and he does. Tokuchi swings and comes up empty but does not record a strikeout. Why not? Due to the lack of accuracy in the pitch, the catcher once again was unable to catch the ball. This results in a unique scenario referred to as an Uncaught Third Strike.


(2) When the pitch is caught by the catcher's uniform, mask, protector, or other equipment, an Uncaught Third Strike is possible.

(1) When a batter swings at a pitch and misses, and the catcher catches it with their mitt after a bounce, or

The proper way to catch a pitch is to grab it with the mitt or hand before it touches the ground, however:

(2) When there are two outs (regardless of whether or not there is a runner on base).

(1) When there is no runner on first base with no outs or with one out.

If the catcher fails to catch the ball properly at the third strike, the batter is not out. However, an Uncaught Third Strike is not allowed in all cases, but only in the following cases:

This essentially indicates that Tokuchi is allowed to try to reach first base. Importantly, he realized the Uncaught Third Strike was imminent as he took off running right after his swing, probably because he sensed the catcher had thrown the modified ball to the pitcher. As he performs this action, his teammates observe that the catcher is not attempting to throw the ball

to first base to tag Tokuchi out. It swiftly becomes clear why. It’s once more because of the ball’s characteristics. The ball will vibrate significantly, regardless of who tosses it, as long as it isn’t thrown correctly. In this situation, it would pose a challenge for the catcher, as he must now choose between two options:

He should throw the ball to first base to getTokuchi out without adjusting his own grip first. This is out of the question since the ball will almost definitely shake, which will draw a lot of suspicion on the ball, since it shouldn’t shake when being thrown in this situation.

Or Adjust the grip before throwing the ball to first base. However, this takes time, and coupled with the time taken to even get ahold of the ball after failing to catch it from the pitcher, this is almost doomed to fail.

The catcher must choose option 2 for safety. Regardless, it's beneficial for the Lycaons in all scenarios. Tokuchi is now positioned on first base. To avert another Uncaught Third Strike, the catcher goes to Williams and gives him the altered ball, stating that they will henceforth use it only for waste pitches. Tokuchi notices and records this.

At this point, Williams is prepared to present once more. Yet, since he possesses the modified ball in his hand, Tokuchi tries to take a base. However, since Williams is gripping the fake ball, the prior issue reappears, he must modify his hold before passing to avoid the ball from wobbling, which consumes time. Thus, Tokuchi successfully reaches second base too.

At this moment, the catcher believes that Tokuchi is aware of their unusual ball, prompting him to opt for delivering the regular ball to the pitcher instead. Yet, that can only happen if the pitcher initially tosses the ball to the catcher, which leads the catcher to shout to Williams to concentrate on the batter rather than Tokuchi. Thus, Williams complies with the catcher's directions, permitting Tokuchi to take third base as well. However, this isn't his only activity. He also observes the actions of the catcher. He understands that the catcher is, as he anticipated, replacing the altered ball with the regular one and hiding the altered ball in his left leg guard, which the catcher allowed to show because Tokuchi's antics distracted him from noticing that Tokuchi was observing him.

Now that Tokuchi is aware of the ball's hiding spot, he initially requests a time-out to convey a message to Mihara, which ultimately is a directive for the upcoming batter to execute a squeeze play. The BlueMars won't anticipate this, as they notice that Tokuchi, after reaching third base, isn't attempting to lead off to steal home, which they believe is due to him understanding that Williams is now holding a regular ball, making a steal futile. But it doesn’t malfunction. When Williams pitches, the hitter performs the squeeze. Tokuchi sprints toward home but, at first look, appears to be trapped. However, Tokuchi mentions that the catcher let the ball hit the ground before tagging him, which would mean Tokuchi is safe and the run would’ve been valid for the Lycaons.

The ball that was released wasn't the typical one the catcher had in his mitt then, but the fake one concealed in his leg guard. And it wasn't really let fall. Tokuchi feigned stealing home to approach the catcher, then, when tagged, he removed the ball from his leg guard and tossed it aside. And it's not that the catcher can simply demonstrate to the umpire that he indeed tagged him with the ball in his glove, as that would expose the presence of both balls in the arena, which would clearly necessitate an investigation. The catcher will simply need to handle it. Subsequently, the Blue Mars must abandon the phony knuckleball, and Williams goes back to pitching as usual.

Even though Williams' pitches were ineffective, the Lycaons continued to secure hit after hit. And they continued to receive hits even after he was replaced. At this point, the Lycaons added another 4 runs, putting them 4 runs in front of the opposing team. Nevertheless, although Tokuchi has triumphed over Blue Mars, he still needs to overcome Saikawa in this match.

It appears that Saikawa had incentivized the opposing team to harm Tokuchi during the game in an attempt to keep him sidelined for the forthcoming matches. The contract for One Outs required Tokuchi to adhere to orders from the bench or incur a penalty of 500 million yen each game. This covers the situation where Tokuchi cannot adhere to the bench's directives, which entails being mandated to take a break due to injury.

In the real game, Saikawa's strategy first emerges in the top of the ninth inning, as the Lycaons are on offense and Tokuchi is up to bat. The thrower is Minamishiba. When Minamishiba throws, he doesn't target the strike zone, but instead focuses on Tokuchi himself, hoping that this will be sufficient to knock Tokuchi out of the game because of an injury. Minamishiba could subsequently evade consequences by claiming he lacks strong pitching control.

Regardless, after Minamishiba has targeted Tokuchi twice, Tokuchi realizes what he's attempting. In the following instances when Minamishiba pitches, Tokuchi reacts by tossing his bat at the pitcher, asserting that it's due to Minamishiba's pitches making him anxious and causing his grip on the bat to weaken. And it will persist if Minamishiba maintains his current pitching style. Minamishiba, upon hearing this right after being struck twice by Tokuchi's bat throws, is understandably panicked. Consequently, when the catcher for Minamishiba next instructs him to pitch the ball to Tokuchi, he disregards the command and simply strikes Tokuchi out. By this means, Tokuchi evaded the initial phase of Saikawa's strategy to compel his short-term retirement.

Next, at the bottom of the last inning, Tokuchi is positioned at first base. A batter, Hayashi, is brought in as a pinch hitter, a player known for exceptional speed and high on-base percentage. The Lycaons' pitcher throws the ball and Hayashi makes contact, sprinting toward first base. As Hayashi arrives at first base, he collides with Tokuchi, who is trying to tag him out, and later pretends to be hurt. Tokuchi was quick to realize what he was doing and managed to evade

danger. He probably would have inferred by now, considering Minamishiba's earlier actions, that the BlueMars aimed to harm him.

However, in contrast to earlier, the goal this time wasn't to harm Tokuchi. It was meant to help him understand that he needs to take the mound as a pitcher if he wishes to prevent more attempts to hit him like this. Because in that location, the BlueMars cannot reach him as they can a base-defender. However, this time, the BlueMars have no intention of hurting him. With Tokuchi now being a pitcher, the BlueMars coach comes over to comfort him, assuring him that Hayashi's behavior will not happen again, giving him a pat as he speaks. The patting was performed so he could slip sandpaper into Tokuchi's back pocket.

Having completed that, when Tokuchi throws, the batter lets the catcher receive the ball. This allows the batter to retrieve the ball from the catcher to demonstrate that it has been scuffed with sandpaper, prompting the umpire to check Tokuchi for any hidden items. Tokuchi responds by requesting that the umpires examine not only him but also all others who have come into contact with the ball, such as the head umpire, the catcher, and the batter. It ultimately seems more logical, after all.

The batter readily accepts this. The reality was that the ball remained unscratched until the batter made contact with it. While the batter held the ball, he scratched it with his sandpaper before discarding the piece on the ground, allowing a teammate to retrieve it under the pretense of checking on the batter's situation. Consequently, the only person who should possess sandpaper at this moment is Tokuchi.

If events unfolded as the BlueMars intended, Tokuchi would be suspended, and according to the One Outs contract, he would have to pay Saikawa 500 million yen for each match he missed as mentioned earlier. However, Tokuchi also couldn't claim that the younger Shirooka was cheating, because, as Saikawa states, "if a person is branded as a cheater, then no one will trust them if they assert that the other team is cheating without evidence." This arrangement stemmed from an agreement between Saikawa and the younger Shirooka, in which Saikawa would compensate Shirooka to discover a method to suspend Tokuchi. If Tokuchi is "caught cheating," even if the cheating allegation prompts an official inquiry into the BlueMars, it will require time before the investigation is finalized. During that period, Tokuchi will have to be sidelined from every game.

Returning to the game, while the four individuals who handled the ball are being investigated, the batter becomes aware of something, there is still sandpaper in his pocket, despite ensuring that a teammate had retrieved it. It appears that Tokuchi once more realized what the Blue Mars were up to, ever since the coach approached him regarding Hayashi.

When Hayashi patted him, he already suspected something was placed in his back pocket, finding it to be sandpaper. As a result, he visits Ideguchi, seeming to engage in a typical

conversation with him. Here, Tokuchi subtly gives him the sandpaper he discovered, and Ideguchi, while going back to his spot, secretly slips it to the batter who claimed Tokuchi used the emery ball. In this manner, it’s the batter who must now contend with sandpaper in his pocket. The batter would have been sealing his own fate if he continued to press his accusation, possibly endangering his entire team's prospects as well.

Upon finding sandpaper in his pocket, the batter anxiously instructs the umpires to halt the searches, asserting that the scratches were likely caused by the ball hitting the ground or something similar. Although Tokuchi insists that the umpires proceed, he suggests that the batter must apologize for his claims by pleading, which he also subtly encourages the batter to do to avoid revealing his team’s secret. In the end, the batter opted for humiliation instead of revenge.

With this, Tokuchi eluded Saikawa’s second and more intricate phase of his scheme, while also somewhat embarrassing the BlueMars. Although Tokuchi failed to call out the BlueMars for cheating, Shirooka has now exhausted all his tactics. Tokuchi has stopped being infatuated with each of them by now. The game concludes with the score remaining at 11-7. Due to Tokuchi's efforts, the Lycaons have triumphed over the Blue Mars in 2 of their last 3 games, indicating they are no longer the team with the worst winning percentage following the season opener…and Mihara retains his current salary.