

Scritto da Administrator

Mercoledì 04 Marzo 2020 19:47 -

The half-time show at Alvark Tokyo's home match on November 16, 2019. CUE3, which gained attention even outside of Japan for its long shoot from the center line, had been revamped as the new model CUE4. Its hallmarks are the abilities to grasp and shoot a basketball by itself, and to run.

The #robot, which was still under development, managed to move a few meters on that day, but the leader of the development team, Tomohiro Nomi, made a vow to Alvark's fans.

"CUE4 will attempt a three-point shootout this season."

The three-point shootout is a contest held before the annual All-Star Game in the United States, the home of basketball. Each player attempts five shoots from each of the five positions within one minute.

Those already familiar with CUE's development to date would understand what a reckless challenge this would be for CUE. Just take a look at CUE3, which debuted in April 2019.

One shoot takes around 15 seconds, calculated based on the distance to the goal, and the angle. The three-point shootout requires repeated shoots in rapid succession, and also fast movement between the five positions. It was approximately one and a half years since the project began in May 2018, and just seven months since the launch of CUE3. The CUE team's impossible challenge began.

A #robot Loan to Another Team!?

About a month after vowing to attempt the three-point contest, Alvark issued an unusual press release.

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"AI basketball #robot CUE4 on temporary transfer"

The age has arrived when even robots transfer. According to the release, from the first-gen CUE to CUE4, after roughly two years with Alvark, CUE would transfer to Levanga Hokkaido (Levanga) to further its career.

About Levanga Hokkaido

A professional basketball team based in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan. The team is named from an inversion and "Anglicization" of syllables in the Japanese word "ganbare," a term of encouragement.

Regarding the transfer, Nomi stated that, "Since gaining the opportunity to continue CUE's development as part of their work, we strived to brighten and energize Japan through manufacturing that gives people a feeling of waku-doki (excitement and exhilaration), and to repay Japan's Basketball League through the activities of CUE. After I shared these thoughts with Levanga, the players and staff unanimously agreed to accept CUE. I was so pleased that both the company and the team could accept CUE as one of their own.

We also want to deliver an ever more impressive performance to repay Alvark Tokyo, who have provided various support and opportunities to date, and to our suppliers, who have empathized with the CUE project, and have developed special parts for us."

CUE4 Lands in Hokkaido

On December 28, 2019, CUE4 made its debut appearance at Hokkaido Prefectural Sports Center, Hokkai Kitayell, which is home to Levanga. Its green uniform was a new look.

The team toiled to repair damage sustained during transit and from condensation due to the cold, but CUE still managed to perform consecutive free throws and three-point shots. The players, staff, and fans of Levanga were amiable, and the team felt the warmth of Hokkaido.

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Dream Scene? B. League All-Star Game

Early in January, they received great news. In recognition of previous activities, the team's dream since its launch was realized when CUE4 was formally selected for the B. League All-Star Game, and it gained the opportunity to perform in the three-point shootout.

About the B. League All-Star Game

Players are selected based on votes from fans and league recommendations, and divided into two teams, B. BLACK and B. WHITE. The three-point shootout and other events are held leading up to the main match, adding to the excitement.

The team approached CUE4's development by clarifying issues in preparing to compete in the three-point shootout. In order to realize swift movement, the power and communication cables previously connected to the #robot needed to be eliminated, and it was necessary to develop and install a small, powerful specialized motor.

Also, the swaying of the #robot after a shoot has a large impact on shoot accuracy. The team required realization of optimal shooting movement to both control swaying and achieve successive shoots. In addition to above challenges, to resolve other various issues, development required total revision of everything, from the sensors and internal framework through to the AI algorithms.

On the day of the main match, the stadium was packed to capacity. (Tickets for the All-Star Game apparently sold out in two minutes.) The MC made an announcement and CUE4 appeared on-screen. During rehearsals the day before, for some reason CUE4 was unable to score even a single goal, could not grip the ball at all, but somehow the team had it ready for the main event. Now was the time to make or break it.

Dressed in an All-Star's uniform, CUE4 reached for the first ball.

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Make sure to watch the video of the main event.

CUE4 shot 11 goals, sending the crowd into a frenzy.

Staging it prior built up the excitement for the main match, where the B. Black team won 123-117, and Levanga's Orimo was selected as the MVP. At the end, CUE's team felt a sense of satisfaction and were relieved that the performance went off without a major hitch.

Preparation for the Last Season

On February 25, CUE4 returned to Alvark, having completed its "rental" transfer at Levanga. "We had an unforgettable experience in Hokkaido, with the cheering of the Levanga fans at the first match and CUE4's appearance at the All-Star Game," said Nomi. "Through our future activities, we hope to in some way repay those people who have supported us."

The team is off to a great start for 2020, which will be the last season, with the future yet to be determined. The future promises to be just as riveting.

CUE4

Shirt number94PositionShooting guardHeight209 cmWeight91 kgFromToyota City, Aichi Prefecture