

Aura Sphere
by Holo

"Come on out Astor!" Deco shouted as he hurled his Pokeball into the arena.

"Machamp, you're on!" his Blackbelt opponent yelled, doing the same.

The two Pokemon appeared in the arena in flashes of red light. Astor turned up his snout and crossed his arms over his chest, sneering and snorting at his opponent. Machamp flexed all four of its arms, posing to show off its considerable bulk. The two trainers stared one another down from across the battlefield of packed earth.

"Astor, Aura Blast!" Deco ordered.

"Tackle him Machamp!"

Astor focused his aura into his hand and blasted out a stream of blue energy that stretched across the arena. Machamp put its four arms together into a shield and charged clear through the energy stream, barreling through it like a freight train through a plywood wall. Deco and Astor were caught off guard by the reckless maneuver, and that huge wall of muscle rammed the Lucario full force. Astor was lifted off the ground and thrown out of the ring by the collision. He flipped midair and managed to land on his feet, but he was visibly scuffed from the attack.

"Jump Kick back into the arena Astor!" Deco shouted. Astor nodded and pushed off the ground, soaring to the ceiling of the arena. He almost seemed to float there for a moment before diving back down, aiming a high-velocity kick at his opponent's head.

"Take 'em out with a Seismic Toss Machamp!" the Blackbelt instructed. Machamp sneered and leaped into the air in turn, cracking the packed dirt under its feet from the force of the launch. It grabbed Astor in midair, and with a flex and heave of its muscles, sent the Lucario hurtling to the ground. Astor hit hard enough to break the floor, stunning and dazing him as he lay prone amid chunks of earthen debris. Machamp landed on his feet a couple yards away and dusted off its shoulders.

"Come on Astor, get up! We're just getting started, right buddy?" Deco encouraged.

Astor grit his teeth and pushed himself to his feet. His clenched jaw softened into a self-assured grin. And Deco smiled with pride. Astor's aura flared up from the damage he tanked from the attack, glowing like a soft blue flame and pushing aside the smaller pebbles of debris.

"Hah! You think all that Aura is going to help you? You still haven't scratched my Machamp! No amount of attack power will help you if you can't land a hit in the first place!" The Blackbelt taunted from across the damaged battlefield.

"Pokemon battle are about playing the long game!" Deco insisted.

"Then I'll cut this game short! Machamp, finish that Lucario! Machine Gun Punch!"

"Bide, Astor!"

Astor grounded himself, stance wide and face stern as Machamp rushed him and landed a punch right against his face. Machamp's four arms fired like pistons, pummeling Astor with a blinding frenzy of blows. Astor stood strong, taking the full force of each hit. His aura grew with every hit until the gym was flooded with blazing blue light.

Machamp finally tired out and backed away, panting and sweating. Astor was scuffed, and his fur was frazzled, but he hadn't moved an inch.

"What? There's no way that scrawny wimp of yours could have withstood that! Machamp, did you hold back?" the Blackbelt said, bewildered.

"I warned you! Astor, it's time to prep for the finale! Aura Bomb!"

Astor's serious expression cracked into a smirk. His stance relaxed, and he took a deep breath. The mass of aura that flared off his fur began to draw into his body. His eyes, hands, and feet started to glow from all the power flooding through them. All of a sudden, Astor began to swell. It started small, a slight bulging of his stomach and limbs and cheeks; but it became more pronounced as more and more of that gym-filling aura was drawn in. His chest and back puffed up, and his limbs bloated further as the aura tried to escape through his extremities. A sound like a gas leak hissed through air, softly at first, but it grew louder as Astor grew more. His mobility was reduced by the swelling of his body until he looked like a balloon tottering on two tiny feet, with hands wiggling uselessly to either side.

"What the hell? Machamp, pop that Lucario balloon! Focus Punch!"

Machamp put all the tension in its body into just one arm, and punched Astor's bloated gut with all the force it could muster. Its fist bounced off with an audible "boing", setting it off balance. The power of the attack caused Astor to bloat with more aura. He still swelled steadily after the added surge, his limbs and head sinking into his rounding body until he looked like a Lucario-themed balloon on the arena floor. His hide let out the occasional rubbery creak as he wiggled his limbs. Gaseous blue aura began to jet out of his nostrils as the pressure of the energy increased inside of him.

"Machamp, if it self-destructs, we lose! Knock out that Lucario before it blows!" the Blackbelt roared in a panic.

Machamp leaped into the air and pounced a Karate Chop down on Astor's sunken head. Astor's face squished down into his over-inflated neck from the blow, eliciting groans from the Lucario's hide as it trembled from the impact. A moment later, Astor's body bloated another couple of feet, leaving his fingers and toes too immobilized to even wiggle. The glow of his aura shone through his skin, and it whistled out of his snout like steam through a tea kettle.

"Errkk, fine! Machamp, lay off, I gotta think!" the Blackbelt ordered, tugging at his hair.

"Astor, Stockpile!" Deco commanded immediately, not giving his opponent a moment of respite.

Astor's body creaked, growing evermore taut and bloated with power.

"What?" The Blackbelt took a step back. "Lucario can't learn that move!"

"That kind of defeatist attitude is why you're not going to win this! Astor, Stockpile!"

Astor took a deep breath, puffing up more, ballooning his once-diminutive body into a tight sphere that shone like a blue sun. His hide was stretched tight as a drum; that four-foot-tall Lucario had blimped and bloated to a staggering fourteen feet in diameter, and was still inching out with more power. He was grinning, fangs showing, aura threatening to belch forth from his mouth should he open it. His skin pulsed with power, trembled with its containment. Astor reveled in the feeling, it was like a galaxy of aura energy beat inside him, drumming in every cell, ready to burst free at a moment's notice. He was strong, stronger than his opponent by miles.

“Astor, Stockpile!”

A long, drawn out crrreeaaaakkk filled the air, followed by a groaning like metal bending under pressure. Astor’s grin grew wider, his heart pounded with adrenaline and excitement. He was bloated to his limit, stretched almost transparent, and glowing so bright the gym lights had shut off. His limbs were long since lost to dimples on his hide that showed where they had sunk, and his cheeks had puffed up to squeeze his face amid the cavern of bloated neck, chest and back that his head sat in. His body was surrounded by a swirling mist of gaseous aura that had been erupting from his snout.

The Blackbelt swallowed. “Oh hell.”

“Astor... Explosion.” Deco smiled, and Astor’s body lit up white all over, blinding everyone in the arena. The next moment, everyone went deaf as an earth shattering explosion rocked the gym to its foundation, cratering the floor and blasting away some of the gym’s interior shielding. Machamp was hurled clear across the room and slammed into the tough metal wall, denting it with its body. Miraculously, the two trainers remained unharmed, though their hair and outfits were blown straight out behind them.

As the dust settled, Astor touched down lightly in the center of the crater he had created, standing tall, and looking completely refreshed. Aura still wafted out of his snout, but he was otherwise back to normal. Machamp was face down on the floor, unconscious.

“The winners are Deco and Astor!” a voice shouted over a loudspeaker. Astor strode off the field, proud, and took a place at Deco’s side. The Blackbelt grit his teeth and clenched his fist, reluctantly recalling his Machamp.

“Impressive technique you’ve got there,” he admitted, sighing and resigning to his defeat. His clenched jaw softened into a good-natured smile. “Good luck with the rest of your battles, both of you!”

“Thanks, you too,” Deco said, as the two shook hands. They parted ways, each leaving through the door they entered, ready to train to become even better.