

Hello hello! It's been a long time, LJL fans! I'm crawling out of the woodwork to spit some mad facts and opinions about League of Legends again! This time, for perhaps the first time in what feels like forever, I'm actually not gonna be talking about DetonatioN FocusMe as much, because to my surprise, and almost everybody else's I'm sure, they are not the clearly best team in the region.

Instead, we're gonna be taking a look more at how Rascal Jester performed in their recent best of five against DFM, take a look at how they won, and get some better insight into how this might translate onto the world stage.

Let's start with the fact that Rascal Jester are not actually better laners than DFM. At the 15 minute mark, DFM was beating RJ in gold in every game save the last. I'll also remind everyone that Game 5 ended with Rascal Jester picking up two kills after reading DFM's invade, giving them nearly a thousand gold lead before laning even began.

Now admittedly, they were going up against a team that had some of the best players in the league in every role, but they were putting themselves at a deficit being less proactive early in the game than DFM were, and the sheer pressure that DFM were able to create gave them lots of early advantages.

This is where we come to one of Rascal Jester's greatest strengths: Secret is one of the best supports I've ever seen at determining when someone is out of position. In NA, we've started calling positional errors 'illegal'. You can't, or shouldn't be able to, get away with standing there. You need to be punished. And if these positional and macro plays are illegal, Secret might be the best police officer we've ever had. It is obvious that the rest of the team trusts his judgement as well.

This leads directly into the thing that impresses me most about Rascal Jester, which is how coordinated they are in their teamfighting, and this isn't something that you can easily find stats for. If you watch how they fight, they are very consistently all moving the same direction. They move forward together, they move backwards together, and they seem to always have a common goal in mind.

This is easily contrasted with how DFM fights, which is much more disjointed. It looks less clear as to whether or not they are looking to take a fight at a given moment. While

this allows them opportunities of massive outplays where a player can pop off by outplaying multiple enemies all at once, it has less success than Rascal Jester's cohesive style. This is reminiscent of an issue I have discussed in the past: the 'too many cooks in the kitchen' problem. When you have a team, not everyone can be a leader. Someone has to be supporting plays made by someone else.

However, they did beat what should be the most dominant team in Japanese League of Legends history in a very tight series, and I expect that we are likely to see another very close series between the two of them. Assuming the same result, which seems fair given how close these teams have been in summer, how will Rascal Jester actually do at worlds?

I think it's instructive to look at how V3 performed at Worlds 2020. It is undeniable that playing on an international stage is more stressful than playing on a domestic one. We saw that Ace in particular, who had become a much more confident mid laner over the course of 2020, struggled to have confidence at worlds. We saw Bugi's mentality change from a player who had more calculated aggression become reckless with his playmaking.

We have to then realize that the only person on this Rascal Jester roster that has played at an international event, and he hasn't done so since 2017, where Kongdoo Monster lost two series in a row to tie for last place.

However, I don't want to leave this in a place of doom and gloom. While I think that DFM will have the best chance of a Japanese team at worlds, simply due to the abundance of experience, it is important to note that experience isn't everything. So I'll take the time to give a counterexample.

In 2013 in NA, another team burst onto the scene. This team was filled with members who had been trying for years to qualify to the LCS, and had consistently come up short. For whatever reason, despite dominating the semi-professional scene, just could never make it. For that same reason, these players had never played in an international tournament prior. They had only played in local events, and a handful of online events. That same team went on to go 25-3 in the regular season, didn't drop a single game in playoffs, and eventually would go on to make it to the quarterfinals of worlds, without a single game of international experience prior.

That team was Cloud 9.

It is incredibly hard to predict how well Rascal Jester will do at worlds. Their early game inactivity is likely to get punished by stronger teams internationally, but their coordination in teamfights is better than some top teams in other regions. I am excited that this team that at the beginning of spring had super low expectations is now poised to head to the international stage, and will be waiting for their almost assured rematch against DFM in finals with bated breath.

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