

# EDITORIAL

When I first left school and opted for private coaching classes instead, I remember feeling this sense of relief. It meant that I no longer had to get up early in the morning, mumble an oath when sleep-deprived, or endure the pain of having my lunchbox stolen. More importantly, it meant I could go study under the guidance of teachers I liked. People who were equal parts competent and compassionate. While it is a decision I now regret, I can't help but find the silver lining in it. Studying in an institution with complete disregard for its students has its consequences.

The very teachers who were responsible for handing down knowledge instead induced first-hand trauma. Being a soft-spoken, reserved kid helped me avoid personal jabs from teachers but I did have my fair share of run-ins with them. Now that I look back at those instances, I feel nothing but anger. Why does a grown adult even feel the need to belittle a child? To what do children owe their innocence being plagued with apathy?

I try but fail to empathise with them – as I sit here facing the consequences of the words they deemed “inconsequential”.

– Abir Hossain, Sub-editor, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### ANIME



## Blue Lock is a mediocre dystopian reimagination of sports anime

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

With the FIFA World Cup 2022 ahead, the hype surrounding football is at an all-time high. And after the recent success of *Ao Ashi*, an anime about football, sports fans were left yearning for more.

That is where *Blue Lock* comes in, with its odd approach to the genre.

*Blue Lock* is set in a realistic world and time setting, as the Japanese Football Association laments over the failings of the national team. They are convinced that the reason behind this is the lack of a world-class striker. To make up for that, they begin a risky and unprecedented training program called Blue Lock.

The program is essentially a state-of-the-art training facility that puts 300 of Japan's most promising young strikers behind closed walls and whittles them down with training regimes until the absolute best forward in the country remains. And among those forwards is our hardworking and level-headed protagonist, Yoichi Isagi, who dreams of representing his nation internationally.

The biggest problem with *Blue Lock* is how it revolves around egoism. The very first agenda that it pushes is that soccer is not a team sport, but rather banks on the ego of its teams' strikers. The mastermind behind the Blue Lock Project, who is conveniently named Ego, believes that the striker is the most important player on the field, and being the best striker outweighs the importance of being a team player.

This is an outlandish concept though because anyone who has ever touched a football knows that the game, or any team sport, doesn't work that way. It also raises a question about the creator's knowledge regarding the game, which seems dangerously low thus far.

However, it is unlikely that the series will take a different direction any time soon, especially since the whole point of the program is to pit the strikers head-to-head in a battle royale-esque setting.

Even then, the anime tries to sprinkle in some realism by mentioning legendary icons like Pele, Messi, and Ronaldo, and showcasing their achievements. But due to the constant shifts in tone, it doesn't achieve much beyond plain lip service.

That isn't to say that *Blue Lock* is outright terrible on every front. Although it establishes an “every man for himself” narrative, certain rounds require the self-centred cast to work in tandem to achieve their selfish goals. This conundrum works especially well since it explores the mentality of every player in a high-stakes high-rewards situation.

Speaking of high stakes, *Blue Lock* is full of them. Behind every match and selection round is a looming fear, because anyone who drops out of the facility – either by choice or by design – must renounce their dreams of playing professional football forever.

The anime itself looks splendid. It sticks to the standout art style of the manga it is adapted from, giving the show an intense and dynamic feel during matches. Character close-ups and facial animations help to characterise the diverse cast of characters and drive home the darker side of the show.

*Blue Lock* is an anime that must be taken with a grain of salt. While it does have the potential to be quite enjoyable and suspenseful, you should definitely look further if you're searching for a faithful portrayal of football.

Ayaan is obsessed with organising spreadsheets. Send him well-formatted emails with bullet points at [ayaan.shams@gmail.com](mailto:ayaan.shams@gmail.com)

### TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



**A**

Blow  
Ke\$ha

Your Body Is a  
Wonderland  
John Mayer

Mastermind  
Taylor Swift

Where the Wind Blows  
Ado

**B**

Bishonnotar Gaan  
Bay of Bengal

Blow Me  
P!NK

Ew  
Joji

Blow Your Mind  
Dua Lipa

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