



American Mustelid Alpha

EPISODE 3

"I'm Feeling Like The King Of The Burrow"

PART 1

February 22, 2020
7:30 PM

The eleven remaining mustelids walk into the Burrow, sporting a variety of expressions: from exhaustion to dawning, it was well marked all over their faces for what just transpired: the very first competitor, marbled polecat Omar Farrakhan, has just been eliminated from the show.

*"Walking into the Burrow this night the mood is completely different." *camera pans on Omar's empty bed, the marbled polecat's belongings having already been removed as he left the house* "It's real, this is real, we are going to lose amazing guys in the wake of our path to progress... it's just... ugh, it'll happen, but it stings."*

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"Well damn..." Chayne mutters, leaning against the kitchen counter. "I sorta feel bad for him that I did him in, but like...it's gonna get only worse from here on, right?"

"You aced the duel, and at the end of the day, what matters is staying here," Michael comments. "This is the reality of what we gonna do every day, so I say to not get too used to each other's faces..."

The marten gulps, not used to see the imposing wolverine serving praise to others. "Yeah, but like..." he shudders, as he tries to explain himself. "We're living in the same house, and well, the luckiest among us will for a full month. You can't really expect us to not feel shit when someone goes."

*"I had the..." *finger quotes* "... "Honor" of being the first guy on the bottom. I know it may not put much stock in me with these people going forward, but all this is going to do is light a fire under my tail. I'm here to win, and I will scrap, outfox 'em, wrestle 'em down, do whatever it takes to win."*
~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

"I mean, dude..." Eddie shrugs, his back pressed against the wall, arms folded across his stout chest. "With all due proportions, it ain't all that different from what we experience in combat. Some guys stay behind, some are lost forever... but at the end of the day, it is what it is. Keep focus on the big target and charge forward."

"It is what it is indeed, now let's go to bed cuz this was a day and a fucking half..." Kenneth grimaces as he peels his top off. "By the way, did anyone get how we gonna choose captains for the next challenge?"

"I thought you wanted to go to bed and unwind..." Arron jokes, making a beeline to the fridge to fetch himself a bottle of water.

"Yeah, but I can't be the only one thinking about the future," the badger shrugs. "Just wondering whether I'd missed a memo or if we all on the same page."

"Does your page say 'pipe the fuck down', Samson? Cuz it should..." Greasy Z walks behind Kenneth, not missing the chance to throw a friendly snark.

The CrossFit instructor turns towards the hog badger, a slight pout on his lip as he stands in mock anger with paws planted over his hips. "Says the one who already covered captain duties..."

"Just sayin bein' that pent up could make ya trip up, or worse, have that pretty hair grow white before time..." Zakee jokes. On his way out, he playfully messes up Kenneth's hair - the badger looking less than elated at the mechanic's antics.

*"Do I want to be captain for once? Course I do!" *throws up his arms in a "duh!" fashion* "The thing is, I'm the only one here who got the balls to admit it outright. If it falls down to a public vote, I can't wait to see what excuses they'll fetch to give it to someone else."*
~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

"Ken's all like 'I wanna be cap! I wanna be cap!' and I'm like, that's makin' you sound the opposite of Alpha right now. Like brother, take a chill pill, a cold shower, jack off if you that antsy, but you behavin' like a squealing pig... and not even Bertha back home gets like that!"
~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

"Hey man, ya think the game's getting to some?" the hog badger asks J.J., the short otter, fetching himself a turkey sandwich from the fridge.

"Uh? Talking John?" J.J. replies, the memories of the argument still fresh.

Z blinks, then shakes his head. "Nah, more like Kenny boy..."

"Oh yeah," the otter nods, taking a big bite. "Nah, he's just acting butthurt that both John and Eddie wiped their backsides with him. For someone who came in thinking he's hot shit and then showing he's lukewarm manure..." he smirks, caught in his own joke. "He's clearly overcompensating and

wanting us to forget as soon as possible. Trying to prove he's Alpha at all costs, when he's actually fishing for some sympathy like the loser he is."

"I mean..." Z retorts, absentmindedly scratching behind an ear. "We don't have to be in game mode 24/7. If he wants to do that, fine by me, but he's gonna run out of gas sooner than all of us. If you push the pedal all the time while drivin', you gonna bust a spark plug..."

"I get Kenneth, but he is not winning any favors. If he keeps being this bratty, maybe most of us don't want to do much with him, much less trust him to... lead. At least Z and William acted leaderly. But as the days go, we will see what happens..."

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

February 23, 2020

10:00 AM

John sits on one of the bar stools, yawning while taking a sip from his coffee - the gym-toned stoat looking around as others get along with their day.

"What's good, Blake?" Arron asks, sitting next to the jailer with his plate of scrambled eggs.

"Eh... guessing I coulda gone more time without thinking of my family back home, especially the kid..."

"I could say the same," the firefighter answers. "Yvonne's just turned two, but I know my wife and parents are taking care of her as long as I'm here," he says. "Ain't easy for me either, but this is a once-in-a-lifetime kinda chance, you know... Guess there are worse places to be stuck in for a month. How old is your kid, by the way?"

"Turned seven in December," John nods proudly. "Gonna be honest, man... Bruce is the main reason I decided to take the plunge and sign in for the show. I don't need to prove myself as much as I need to provide a better future for him, and like you said chances like these never really come out every day."

Having overheard the topic of discussion, Crispin and William can't help but walk in. "You too, huh?" the otter asks.

"You all got one?" John asks, all mustelid around the table nodding except one. "William?"

"One... plus other four," the weasel smirks, showing all the fingers of his left paw and counting off one by one. "Samuel, Merlyn, Kenner, Maynor, and Monserath..."

"Bullshit," Crispin immediately retorts. "You playin' with us, Will..." The other two look at the weasel as well, somewhat incredulous.

The personal trainer shrugs, a faint smile on his features. "Why should I?"

"Because two is already a handful and a half and you don't look a mess," Arron comments.

"Eh, you get used to the rhythm if you got the discipline," William nods. "Me and Gisele had Samuel - that's the oldest one - when I was younger than Andrew."

puzzled look at the camera* "I mean, I just got one and I already got talks about tying up... What the hell? Who you tryin' to impress there?" *laughs

~John, 36, Stoa, Jailer

"I mean... I could say it's a cultural thing. I too came from a large bunch, and if you start asking yourself whether you can afford it or not, chances are you'll never take the plunge on even one kid," the weasel says in a defensive tone. "Not like we were planning on having a large family since we knew each other, but well... you could say we never actively tried to prevent it."

"More like you never actively tried to sleep in separate beds or get a break," Crispin jokes, the group laughing along.

"I'm not judging, I'm just shocked you found the time to get here..." Arron adds up. "One kid is already a part-time job, and you got triple shifts, even the graveyard one is full up!"

"Yeah well... I wasn't sure if I was going to audition until the last week or so. Gisele didn't really feel it, but then again, if anything happens I'm literally thirty minutes away from them..." the weasel shrugs. "And if I may so, I'm sort of surprised we the dads haven't got the upper hand in the house."

"I mean, not all dads look or do the stuff we do, for once..." John snarks up.

"Yeah, I got five kids, but that's no deterrent for me. That only means I got five times the motivation to win this game, you know?"

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"I'm more surprised someone like you got one, to be honest. Wouldn't have guessed it from first impressions and such, brother" Arron says, turning towards Crispin. "So what's the story there?"

The tall, Californian otter shrugs his shoulders. "Heh, there's a lotta things about me you don't know," he says. "Long story short, I do have a six-year-old cub at home, been raising him by myself with some outside help from my cousin and all." The lutrine averts his eyes from the firefighter's, turning his attention to his own plate. He pulls out of his tank top a dogtag-shaped necklace with a square hole in the middle, "B.C.A., 2013.09.22" etched on it in black letters. "I'm not gonna pretend I'm the perfect dad, but I can tell ya that as a single parent... you wanna do more than what's expected," he says, rolling the pendant between his fingers. "Like... this show, all of this, is my one big chance to prove to Brock that every obstacle, fumble and struggle means the best is just around the corner."

Before the others could prod Crispin further, another lutrine approaches the group. "Dad central? How cute..." Eddie speaks up as he sits down, with just enough mirth in his words to show he isn't dismissing the rest.

"Gotta say I'm surprised you haven't got a buncha little Eddies running around," John chuckles. "Ain't you planning to start a family of your own?"

"Well, you gotta run across the right woman, yanno? Best to not force it," the lutrine shrugs, starting to dig into a giant portion of eggs and bacon.

"You kinda like seven years too late with the clutch advice, Ed..." Crispin snarks, to the loud laughter of the rest of the group.

"I mean... seven years ago, I coulda said I was closer to the goal than I am now," Eddie smiles, a hint of sadness tracing his features. "There once was a girl... she stuck with me throughout all my tours, we thought about starting a family, moving over together once I was done putting my life on the line," he recounts. "It never worked out, and she's still out there somewhere, I guess. That's just something I gotta get working on."

"Yeah, sometimes one does feel a bit lonely, but you just wait 'cause eventually it'll happen, and when it does it'll be the best thing ever. In the meantime, I'm lucky I'm doing exciting things with my life."

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"Who would have thought it..." Kenneth laughs, having overheard the otter's confession as he was in the hall. Lowering his voice he whispers to Michael. "The almighty Eddie acting all misty-eyed over some random girl who gave him the boot..."

The massive wolverine frowns. "Well, Terminator here might not be all made of steel, go fig..."

"I had exes and flings and all the jazz. Just man up and get over it, simple..." the badger shrugs.

"The walls in a house this crowded are paper thin..." Eddie talks up, not bothering to look at the pair nor acting upset - Kenneth merely snickering as he realizes he's been called out. "I know you're mad you didn't win, but you can do something more productive than ruining my breakfast," the lutrine says, literally pointing at both the badger and the wolverine. "Not my fault you two can't get some..." The commotion causes a couple of other mustelids to pop their heads out of their rooms, Chayne and J.J. making sure to not miss the confrontation about to start.

"Oh, do we?" Kenneth leans back against the refrigerator, snickering at the otter's remark. "I don't think so, buddy. Can't speak for Michael here..." he briefly turns toward the hulking wolverine, "...but I get enough tail to put your sorry ass outta business." Chayne puts his hand out and does a talking motion towards J.J., the curly-haired otter snickering in response.

"Whatever. If you want to keep being the clown of the Burrow, continue..." Eddie scoffs, tossing his empty plate into the sink before going back to his room.

"Geez, what did I say? What's good, Ed?" Kenneth shrugs, a puzzled look on his face as he spoke in Eddie's general direction. "Dumbass..."

*"He's like a parrot." *gestures with his webbed paw mockingly* "Talktalktalktalktalk on every instance, it's just noise at this point. At the moment, all I can do is not take him seriously and shrug him off."*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

In the sea-themed room, the giant otter is still lying on his unmade bed when Crispin makes his way in, fur slightly damp from his morning ablutions. "You're eager to make new friends, Big Ed, huh?" the tattooed bouncer chuckles, collecting his grooming kit and walking to a mirror to get his long, bushy beard trimmed.

"Heh, dude..." Eddie retorts. "Just more of the usual. You know, Kenneth taking the free stab at me and thinking he's funny..."

"I mean he is funny," Crispin replies, to Eddie's pause. "Funny he thinks he actually is funny..."

The giant otter lets out a dry laugh. "You had me for a moment, Cris..." he shakes his head.

"Listen," Crispin sets his trimmers down. "He's just having a meltdown cuz he's looking at all that's happening and thinking like, 'Shit, maybe I don't belong here!' and in response, all he can do is make noise," the lutrine points at his temple.

"But... he did win the individual last time. Was it all dumb luck?" Eddie asks.

"I'll say, dude..." the bouncer ponders. "Whether it was or not, we'd be fools to underestimate him. After all, he is pretty buddy-buddy with some guys here, namely Honey..."

"Arron? You think so?" Eddie asks, curious, lowering his voice to not be eavesdropped.

"Well, you saw how he insisted on rooming with the guy. And they're spending most of their time training together, bunking together and literally just keeping to each other," Crispin muses as he applies a dollop of conditioner to his beard. "They're clearly gravitating to one another, and if it helps 'em surviving more rounds, that should be a concern to us both."

"I mean, Arron's the house's wise man, and he don't pick fights at all," Eddie's rudder flickers in thought. "He's mad competition, sure, but I don't think he'll make that risky investment to heart..."

Crispin shakes his head. "I just don't trust him, or them to not be on the same page as us when it comes to strategy. If it gets badgers versus otters in this bitch, then I want to make clear who is better. Strike first and strike hard, y'know?"

"Badgers versus otters, you say? I think that's as good as won," Eddie smirks. "If it happens, whatever. Arron's a non-issue, let's just focus on Ken for now, the house could use one less mouthpiece..."

*"It's not like an alliance is the most underground, revolutionary idea ever..." *camera shows both otters talking* "And if there is any chance that Arron and Kenneth got something bubbling, I want to nip it in the bud before it fucks up with our plans."*

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

*"I tell ya, I got my sights set on Kenneth, I'm not here for that bitching and moaning and the fact he can place first in a challenge when under pressure still irks me." *the lutrine lies on his bed with a slight scowl as his friend continues his body grooming* "And if Cris is right about him and 'Ron... eh, let 'em pull their shenanigans and mind games. This otter duo's got the real power in here."*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

February 24, 2020

12:30 PM, 82° F

It's a pretty warm day with little to no wind and nearly perfect weather, only a few clouds blotching the skies.

The group walks out of the Burrow, Ludwig already waiting for them in the front yard. The stoat is wearing a black short-sleeved shirt with camo print and matching shorts, adding to his menacing street look. "Morning guys," he says. "Ready for the next team challenge?"

"You betcha!" Greasy Z loudly says in approval, scratching his head, the rest not failing to notice the change from cyan to bleach blonde.

"The next team challenge is vital. I'm seeking revenge from the last one, and I feel it's my time to shine on this stage. Bring it on, Ludwig!"

~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

"Okay, guys," the stoat grins at the group's eagerness. "Today's challenge is called Capture The Flag. You all have played that as kids, right?" The group nods and agrees, some snickering. "Well, this one is not your kid-friendly version. You'll be facing one-on-one in a sandy field, each starting at one of the short sides. You'll have an elastic band like this one..." he says, showing a heap of white and black bands, "...tied around one of your limbs. Your goal is to capture your opponent's band and bring it back to your team's home without losing yours."

"Sounds brutal..." J.J. comments under his breath, Chayne flicking his ear at the short otter's concern.

"The game will be played in rounds - the winning team will be the first to reach six points," the stoat continues. "Now, I guess you're all wondering how we gonna pick captains, right?"

*"The choice of captains has been bugging everyone since the end of the last challenge. I know I want to be captain, I know most people here do... but if we making teams through a schoolyard pick like last week, the most important thing for my game is that certain people need to stay the fuck away from it." *smirks**

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

"Captains will be chosen through an open ballot," Ludwig says, a few contestants groaning at the notion as they get handed a clipboard and a pen each. As soon as he sees some people in the group immediately turning to each other to discuss the choice, he shushes them with a gesture of his paw. "Now, you gotta do this without talking to each other. If I catch any foul play, your vote is void," he says, everyone immediately going quiet. "Write down the name of the player - other than yourself - that you believe deserves to lead a team the most."

The eleven mustelids jot down the names, some doing so pretty decisively, the rest biding their time for a while as they look around and ponder over the choice.

"I'm voting for Arron because he's my brother, and if I can't be there, I need him to take care of it and hopefully bring me along."

~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

"Eddie killed it in the first physical challenge, and this sounds like it is gonna be similar. He's the dude I'd mind the less following through in this one, so my vote goes to him."

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

"After failing the first team challenge, I know for a fact I'm not gonna get chosen again for a while."
sighs *"I'm picking Chayne because he's the guy I damaged the most and he impressed me by earning the right to stay. Time for him to prove he can bounce back as a leader and an Alpha."*
~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"Okay, time to reveal your choices. Don't peek just yet..." Ludwig instructs the group to flip their boards to him while keeping eye contact.

"Eddie, a vote for John Blake... why's that?"

The stoat turns to look in Eddie's direction. "Well, he was one of the MVPs last time, he won two rounds against two strong dudes..." the otter points towards Kenneth and Arron, "...so I reckon it is time for him to put money where his muzzle is."

"I'm pleased with Eddie taking my side, he's one of the strongest people here and someone I'd have on my team rather than against." **the stoat shows his own vote for Eddie** *"Plus, my word is sacred. I promised him that us strong guys would stick together and I'm keeping that promise."*
~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

"Andrew, you saw Chayne being in the bottom two last time. Why did you go voting for him?" Ludwig asks.

"Uhm, well, he did just decimate someone else on a duel, so figured he is the one who earned this shot the most," the polecat replies, Chayne thanking him with a nod of his head.

"It's neat to see my name popping up," the bartender shrugs. "Besides, I did give my vote to Andrew myself..." he says, turning his clipboard and showing his preference. "He beat me fair and square in the Trench, after all. Call it game respecting game," he winks.

"Ugh...these people are such fucking hypocrites." **Kenneth frowns as more votes as revealed, him getting votes from just Arron and Michael** *"Their motivations are complete BS, like... 'I'm voting for Chayne because he proved himself through a duel'? Wake up people, there was a reason why he was there and people like 'Ron, Michael and I were not! I tell you, these guys need very little fuel to start conspiring'"*
~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

"So here's the final standings: Andrew, Arron and John with one vote each. Kenneth and Chayne with two, and our first captain with four. Eddie, come on down here..." Ludwig speaks up, the elated lutrine joining him on the mat. "So, we will have a show of paws between Chayne and Kenneth. You can only vote for one of them, and they will abstain from voting. So who's it going to be?"

"I may be mistaken, but I think I got more friends than Kenneth here." **mustelids are shown shooting glances all around, trying to make eye contact with each other and guess who is voting for whom** *"It is a good shot for me to redeem myself, so now that it's at my grasp, I want it."*
~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

"Okay, who wants Chayne to be the captain?" the host asks as Kenneth anxiously covers his mouth with both paws. As expected, Andrew and William raise their paw - J.J. and Greasy Z following through.

“So you want to face Kenneth?” Ludwig looks at Eddie, amused as the giant otter stands still with a smirk on his muzzle.

“Chayne’s a smart guy, so...” the otter shrugs, some in the group looking amused. “And I already took Ken on and came out on top, so I do know what I’m facing there.”

“Alright,” the stoat smirks. “Is this the final count?”

After a short pause Crispin raises his paw up, bringing the total to five over four. Kenneth turns towards the tall lutrine, an indignant look on his muzzle. “You serious, dude?” he asks.

“Yep,” the bouncer shrugs, not bothering to add a word.

“Eddie might not like that I’m taking his chance to off the badger, but like hell I’m gonna let Kenneth become captain before me. And man... I tell ya, wiping that dumb smile off his face felt amazing. Worth it just for that!”

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

“Such bullshit... you sending the message loud and clear for everyone else here, Eddie’s lackey...” Kenneth spoke to himself, loudly enough for all to hear.

“It’s just Alpha business, manbun,” Crispin replied, not looking at the badger.

“Well, I think the choice is clear here,” the stoat says. “Five votes to Chayne, four to Kenneth. Chayne, you may step forward and join Eddie here...” he adds, the marten coming out of the group with a pleased smile on his face, turning to face the rest of the group as he approaches the host.

	EDDIE	4	   		CHAYNE	5	    
	CHAYNE	2	 		KENNETH	4	   
	KENNETH	2	 				
	ANDREW	1					
	ARRON	1					
	JOHN	1					

“So here’s what happens now. Eddie and Chayne will take turns selecting their teams, just like last time. But as someone will surely have noticed, you’re standing at an odd number...” Ludwig says, some players immediately nodding along. “The contestant not getting picked will not take part in the team challenge, and will join the losing five on the next Individual.”

The group gasps as Eddie looks at Chayne, both captains in shock.

“This is harsh. You’re basically going to one of your peers and like, club them on the knee first thing in the morning. This will cause bad blood however it plays... I’ll say I’m happy they’re picking teams and not me.”

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

“On one paw, you want to build the strongest team - on the other paw, you’re trying to send off your foe and rob him of a chance to save himself. I feel this is gonna result in some heavy strategic play,

but I know I got the chops to stand up to Eddie and whoever he picks."

~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

"Alright, we drew lots to decide who picks first. Eddie won the coin toss and chose to lead the white team." Ludwig turns to the lutrine, already wearing a white elastic band around his arm.

"Eddie...who you gonna pic-"

"No brainer. Cris," the otter interrupts the host, beckoning his friend to join him. "This is gonna get physical, and it is gonna get ugly. He's the best equipped for the job," he says as Ludwig gives the bouncer a white band, the two lutrines shaking fists right after.

"With Eddie leading a team, I knew I was going to be called sooner instead of later. That he chose me first, despite me not siding with him on the choice of captains, kinda reassures me this is the guy I oughta stick to."

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

"Your turn, Chayne. Who do you want on Team Black?"

The marten sighs, putting his paws over his mouth. "We cannot deny he is in great shape and definitely wants to carry his weight, especially against those guys over there... for that, I'm picking Ken."

Many players in the group shake their head or look over in disbelief as the badger steps forward, accepting the black band and joining Chayne with a hasty fistbump. "It's all good, Ludwig. We got this," he says.

*"I'm like... what game is Chayne playing? Choosing Kenneth over known quantities such as John, Michael, even Andrew... kinda makes me think he wants to pit Eddie's known rivals against him. We'll see if that works for him, I guess..." *shrugs**

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

Eddie looks at the rest of the group, taking time to ponder over his next decision. "This game demands brawn, no questions about it. Hence, I reckon I'm gonna go with Big Mike," he says, beckoning over the hulking wolverine.

"A team of brawlers alright," Michael comments, as he takes his band from Ludwig's paws before joining his teammates.

"Well, these two are like two peas in a pod, or well, like Sonny and Cher, so I need to have them together... Arron."

The firefighter comes forward and immediately bro-fists with Kenneth, acknowledging the marten a second later. "Gonna pretend I didn't hear that," he says, nonetheless accepting his own black band.

"It's a good thing!" Chayne jests.

"Only if he plays Cher..." Arron rebukes, jokingly elbowing his badger friend and provoking a laugh out of everyone.

**lets out a sharp breath* "This is going from bad to worse. Part of me wants to leave most of these guys to scurry at individuals, but I can't weaken my team else my own rudder is at risk, especially since some of these guys would want me gone ASAP..."*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"Now... I've seen this guy train, it did take me by surprise how strong he actually was without compromising swiftness..." Eddie puts his paws on his hips. "He also placed on the top 2 first for a reason, that's why I want Will on board."

The weasel lets out a sigh of relief, going to pick up his white band, some of the four left standing frowning at their current situation.

*"I feel rather confident about the team I'm in. Those guys are big, imposing and know a thing or two about actual floor fighting." *camera pans over the trio of Eddie, Crispin and Michael* "I'm ready to shake off my own loss and carve myself a new path in the game."*

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

Chayne raises his sights up. "You know I'm not gonna leave you hanging, come on to the good side Andy," he quips with a laugh.

"Me?" the polecat perks up, mildly surprised at being called out. "Thanks Chayne, won't let y'all down," he says, getting his own black band before standing next to Arron. The three remaining players - John, J.J. and Greasy Z - are looking increasingly nervous.

"This is tough to decide. Z I feel... he can square it off at individuals and still return all smiles and shit after his cap stint, but then I don't know what to do... J.J. and I are tight, but... is he the right decision? Can I risk pissing John off this early after he put his trust on me? Whatever I say, a bridge will be demolished to rubble."

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"Eddie, you gotta choose one last member to your team. Just to remind everyone, the odd mustelid out will be heading straight to Individual..."

The large lutrine sighs. "Yanno you guys and I keep it real, you all are a great bunch and amazing brothers, thank you all for voting for me... but for this final pick I'm going with John Blake."

"Yes!" the stoat pumps his fists as he strolls forward, immediately going to shake Eddie's webbed paw.

"This shit's fucked up. I got a feel they don't want me cuz they oversold the 'he lost twice while cap' deal, and want to see me go down and prove my chops. If they do that, big mistake. Darn big mistake."

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

"What gives to both of them? I voted for them as captains and this is how they repay me? I'm gonna remember this if they fuck me over..."

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

"Alright, here's where we are," Ludwig recaps. "Chayne, you've got one last player to pick. If you choose Z, J.J. will not participate in the competition and be sent to the next Individual Challenge

where he'll be facing the losing team - otherwise, the same will happen to Z," he says. "What's your choice?"

"Considering what's at stake, and the challenge that we are going to face..." Chayne looks at both with a serious expression on his face. "Know it's nothing personal, and this won't affect how we go on if you survive, understood?"

Both mustelids left nod to the marten, who sighs heavily in response. "From what I've seen, I believe he is the best option in this particular challenge.... J.J., I'm sorry my man, but I'm going with Z..."

The hog badger steps forward, his features a mixture of relief and displeasure at being called last. "It's all good, Ludwig," he tells the host before he can even open his muzzle. "We're gonna rock this joint from start to finish. I've gotten this chance and Imma play it out as best as I can, I owe him that much."

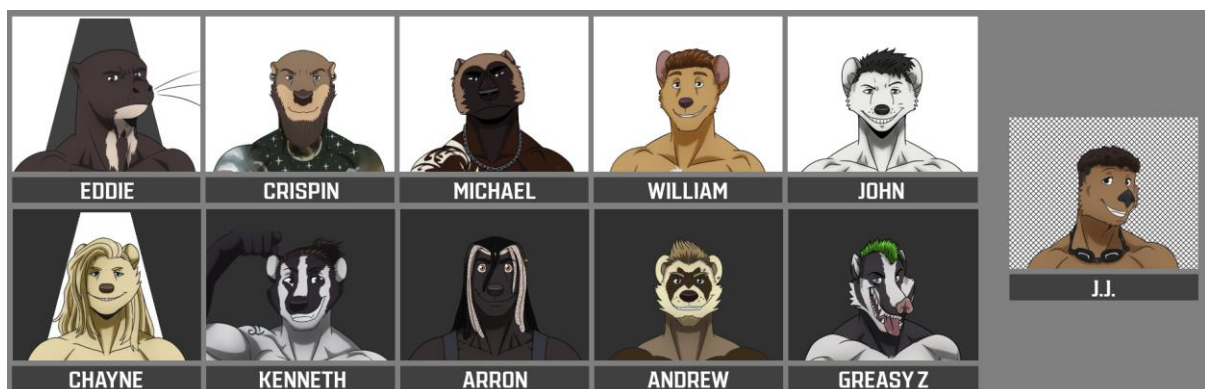
"I picked Z because of his rowdiness. You can't deny he has a great track record to date, and to ignore all that cuz of whatever he did while he was a winning captain would be stupid."
~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

"J.J., I'm sorry, love. But you'll make it..." the marten tries to console the young otter.

"See you at Indy, the both of you," the triathlete shoots back, in a playful yet challenging tone.

"I get why Eddie and Chayne made the choices they made, since they need to save their tails first and foremost. But at the same time, if the last team challenge taught us anything, it's that it would be naïve to think that size equals fighting skills. As far as I'm concerned, I don't mind facing any of these teams - I'm ready to take on all of them."
~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

"Alright, we got our teams. Eddie, Crispin, Michael, William and John are the white team, taking on Chayne, Kenneth, Arron, Andrew and Greasy Z for the black team," Ludwig says, as the camera pans over the two groups. "In the locker room, you'll find all the gear you need for this challenge. Give ya fifteen minutes to get changed, then we'll head out..."



The sun is beating over a large, rectangular sandy field delimited by sandbags. Both teams walk in, all players clad in their respective colors, before taking their position at each side of the field - the black team getting at Ludwig's left while the white team takes his right, the stoat standing in the middle with a big grin on his muzzle.

“So...this is going to play out like before. Captains pick who goes versus who, everyone needs to go out at least one time. Once every contestant has played, it’s up to the teams to decide who they wanna field,” the host says. “As before, the winning team will be safe from the upcoming elimination, while the losing team will be facing J.J....” The otter motions to the group, the faintest smile on his lutrine muzzle, as he sits on a bench next to Ludwig. “...in the second Individual challenge of this competition. In addition, once again the captains are playing for a \$1000 cash tip reward, but there’s an added prize. The winning team will get to enjoy an authentic Italian pizza dinner, courtesy of Franco’s Coal Fired Pizza.”

The entire group starts a loud cheer. “I’m talking coal fired, tasty, cheesy goodness, with ingredients like freshly-made dough, imported Italian tomatoes and mozzarella, and a whole set of traditional toppings. And don’t forget, great wines and cold beers to wash it all off...” the host goes on, some of the competitors openly salivating at the thought. “Guess that’s a nice enough incentive on top of what we got already, aight?”

“Stai scherzando...” Eddie quips in Italian, other contestants turning towards him in surprise. “What? The surname wasn’t obvious enough?” he says, mildly amused. “I might be third-generation, but some traditions die hard! I don’t fuck around when it comes to good food!”

“Damn, finally something nice and tasty to sink our teeth into! Not that we’re dying of hunger, but with our food rationed and us having to balance our daily allowance and cook every day, fresh-baked pizza is something we can only afford to dream for the time being.”

~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

“Okay, seems we’re about ready to start this show,” Ludwig says, all mustelids having changed into their combat boxers or gym trunks. “Eddie, as you won the coin toss earlier on, the first choice falls to you. Who are you pitting?”

“Myself,” the lutrine behemoth answers nonchalantly, the elastic band already wrapped around his left bicep.

The host nods. “Chayne? Stepping up to the challenge?”

“I believe there is someone on my squad that has a bigger bone to pick than I with Eddie here, and I’ll let him step up...” the marten nods, waiting for what he expected to happen.

As soon as he hears the words, Kenneth takes a step forward, immediately turning to Chayne for confirmation. “This is the chance, Kenneth,” the marten smiles. “Go get him, buddy...”

“I mean, all the better if I can take down lil’ Kenny by myself, but I woulda thought of you to go first,” Eddie quips, watching with a frown as the badger shakes off his limbs in preparation for the fight. “Captain against captain, would have been all but fair...”

“I rather try to be smart than fair,” Chayne replies.

“Well fine by me, but dude - you won’t always be able to hide between your teammates, ya know,” the otter comments.

“You’re doing a lot of talking, and I would have stepped up anyway and you know that,” Kenneth interrupts the pair, taking position at his side of the field. “Don’t pretend to be a saint, it doesn’t fit ya.”

"Whatever, badger," Eddie shrugs. "Let's fight..."

"Captainship be damned, I'm the one who will get him to crack first. The streak is over Mr. Perfect, time to prove yourself..."

~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

*"Kenneth is a hard nut to crack, but this is my game. I'm ready to swing at him, I'm ready to jump in and prove my dominance on the field. Let's fucking do this." *rubs paws**

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"Eddie, Kenneth...ready?" Ludwig asks - both contenders grunting in response, already focused on their opponent. "GO!"

The two mustelids spring forward, dashing through the center of the field and going in for the low tackle - Eddie managing to shoulder Kenneth to the ground, easily getting him into a pin. The CrossFit instructor thrashes against his opponent, tail jerking against the sand as he tries to get free and get a hold of his armband. Otter and badger twist and turn on the field, both trying to get the upper ground as their respective sides cheer them on.

Eventually, Eddie manages to wrap both his arms around his rival's body, his superior grappling experience on display as he pushes hard against Kenneth's back - the badger's muzzle pressed against the sand and contracted in a grimace as the otter pins him to the ground.

"Seems like the former SEAL is still in prime fighting shape..." the host comments with a grin, as the lutrine is clearly overpowering the badger - his thick rudder wrapped around Kenneth's leg, holding him still as he tries to get a hold of his arm. The CrossFit instructor is flailing, his own limbs entangled with the otter's, bucking on the ground in a valiant attempt to sap the bigger fur's endurance.

Minutes pass, but neither fur feels confident enough to make a move for the armband. Eddie has Kenneth in a vice, but he's struggling to hold him still enough to be able to slip the elastic band off his arm. Soon as the otter relents his clutch, the badger pounces back with what little strength is left in his body and manages to toss Eddie off him, immediately grasping at the lutrine and managing to get him in a lock.

The contenders' bodies are caked in sand and sweat, their effort growing more and more desperate by the minute. "Just give up..." Kenneth growls in Eddie's ear, their muzzles inches from each other as the lutrine gets a noseful of the badger's heady musk. The otter doesn't answer the provocation, his own paws wrapped around the black-and-white furred mustelid's back in a seemingly inextricable tangle.

The camera shows a timelapse of the two contestants grappling, neither of the two managing to overpower their opponent. Eddie's muzzle is buried into Kenneth's shoulder, feigning a bite. The badger's legs are wrapped around the otter's left thigh, corded muscle tensing in a painful cramp and exciting a muffled bawl from the older mustelid. Neither of the two seem to be wanting to give an inch. "Thirty minutes have passed!" Ludwig announces, a surprised gasp lifting from both angles.

*"These beasts have been going on for what seems forever." *camera shows Eddie grimacing in pain as Kenneth catches him in a crushing bearhug* "You better don't give up, rudder! I don't want to go to another fucking individual again."*

~Michael, 35, Wolverine, Blacksmith

Eventually, Kenneth tries to grasp Eddie's arm with both paws in a desperate hurl, relenting his hold on the lutrine's lower section. As both contenders raise to their knees, the otter takes it as his chance to pounce back, his body darting forward in a blur as he pushes Kenneth back on the sand. Immediately, before his opponent has had the time to react, Eddie gets a hold of the armband and slips it off, getting on all fours as he starts to make his way back to his team's "home".

"Eddie's got the band!" Ludwig cheers, the otter gaining inch after inch as Kenneth tries to hold him back by clutching his ankle. Eddie nonchalantly shakes his paw from the badger's grip and immediately sprints towards his side, crossing the line in a matter of seconds. The whole team jumps over their captain in celebration, him falling on his back while still tightly clutching Kenneth's black armband.

"Gotta give it to Kenneth - this was one of the toughest brawls in my life. I got scrapes and welts all over, and I reckon I dealt him a good number of those as well. But all that matters is that I earned the point, I proved again I'm tougher than him and I stay unbeaten on this turf."
~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

*"Fuck this... fuck this fuck this fuck this..." *shakes his head* "Eddie better enjoy this stroke of luck, cuz you won't be getting many anytime soon..."*
~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

"So... the white team is ahead, one-zip. Remember we're playing to six points," Ludwig recaps. "Chayne, who you sending over?"

The marten turns to whisper to Arron. "It's likely they're sending Crispin next. They're pumping up over there, you feel you can take him?"

"Had him last time," the honey badger scoffs. "Let's even this up..."

"Alright, my pick is Arron," Chayne turns to Ludwig. "He got the thickest skin of all here, he won't even feel the blows," he smirks.

"That's because he ain't tried Crispin's yet," Eddie chimes in. "Cris, go get him..." he says, patting his fellow otter's backside.

"Short memory, right?" Arron quips, equipping his flag on his arm as Kenneth did before. "I remember ya lying in that trench as a dead fish as I dove for the bell..."

"Beginner's luck..." Crispin replies nonchalantly - a devious idea forming in his mind. Instead of his arms or legs as the instructions implied, the otter wraps his own elastic band around his heavy, lutrine rudder. "Try slipping that off, buddy..." he grins in the badger's direction, his features curled in a defiant smile under his thick beard.

Arron frowns, pointing at the otter as he turns to his host with a confused expression on his face. Crispin just shrugs. "He said limbs, and last I checked, the tail's one of 'em. We all got a tail here, up to you whatcha wanna do with it..."

"Arron, it is good to go," Ludwig replies. The honey badger looks like he wants to complain, but he eventually sets into position, a fingerclaw pointed towards Crispin. "I'll get you anyway, otter," he sneers.

"He can pull all the tricks he wants, but I'm a war machine aimed at him. I wanna see how that stupid grin looks like after I've torn that flag off his rudder."

~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

"I don't get what the big deal is. In this game, muscles alone don't cut it - you gotta play it smart too. And if I got it, I'll use it."

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

"Alright, guys..." the stoat motions. "Crispin, Arron...GO!"

Otter and badger clash towards each other, almost in a reenactment of the previous duel. Crispin ends over Arron, the firefighter's legs twisted around the lutrine's as he deals the opening blow and easily pins him into submission. With his arms free, Arron tries to lunge for Crispin's rudder - but the otter is flagging it, making it impossible for the badger to get a hold of the thick appendage as long as he's under his opponent.

Despite Arron's body being practically all muscle, it isn't hard for the Californian lutrine to keep him pinned. Crispin immediately goes to block the honey badger's right arm with his own - the lutrine's furred armpit inches from Arron's snout - while he proceeds to slip off the band with his other paw, the firefighter snarling and twisting his arm under the otter's body to make it tougher for Crispin to get a hold of the prize.

The fight turns vicious as the lutrine begins pulling on the badger's arm with both paws, Arron's features contracted in excruciating pain but refusing to just roll over to Crispin. The black team watches in dread as the otter seems about ready to twist his opponent's arm. "He's gonna tear it off if Arron doesn't let him..." Chayne grimaces.

The otter's white band is almost forgotten as Crispin doubles down on the attack, his tail still flagged and swishing from side to side as he savagely pulls on the badger's arm. Eventually he manages to slip off the band, Arron immediately going for the otter's rudder as soon as the bouncer jumps off him, but struggling to get a hold on the muscular appendage as Crispin sprints towards the line - diving into his "home" like a wide receiver scoring a touchdown. "Crispin scores!" Ludwig yells, the heavily tattooed lutrine immediately jumping to his feet and pounding his chest in defiance at the badger's direction. "And just like that, Eddie's team is up by two!"

"I think everyone's been duped by the badger bros' real quality. If we don't make it out of this alive, I think the rest of us plus J.J. are going to be safe. But there still are plenty of chances to do this right."

~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

After a quick deliberation, Eddie's ready to call in his next move. "Gonna put in William," the otter says, the weasel dad pumping his arms in anticipation.

"He did manage to win over him up until this challenge..." Chayne says, Greasy Z immediately perking up at the marten's words. "I'm putting you in, Z. Come out winning again."

"So, we settling up another grudge here it seems..." Ludwig comments, as the hog badger and the weasel get ready to play their round. "Ready... GO!"

Unlike the previous brawlers, William employs a different strategy - choosing to wait for Z in his own half of the field, before lunging at him once he makes the first move. Both mustelids go for each

other's arm, trying to get a hold of them before their opponent can. Eventually they fall to the ground, the hog badger grabbing the weasel's "flag" in a rough motion and easily slipping it off William's bicep.

"Zakee's got the band, can he bring it home?" Ludwig comments. Realizing the situation he's in, William desperately clutches the hog badger's midsection and brings him down with him, trying to prevent him getting out of the field. Z tosses and turns around on the sand, trying to get the weasel to break his hold, but to no avail.

Eventually, though, William realizes he needs to take an arm off Zakee's stomach if he wants to steal his own flag. As soon as he does, the hog badger springs forward, sending the weasel careening on his back and immediately dashing towards his corner as he gets up. "YES!" he screams as he crosses the field line, realizing he managed to finally score a point after his previous defeats.

"The black team scores!" Ludwig screams, raising his paws. "And just like that, Chayne's team is on the board!"

*"I'm disappointed at myself, really. I sort of thought Z wouldn't be too tough a competition in such a field, especially after I beat handily in the Trench." *the weasel is shown closing his eyes, defeated, as he lays prone on the field - his brownish coat completely covered in sand* "He came in looking for revenge, and he got it... but not for long, I tell you."*

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

The marten captain quickly goes to congratulate his winning teammate, breathing hope in his team. After whispering briefly with Andrew, he makes his way to the field with a determined look on his face. "I'm going in, Ludwig," Chayne says to the host. "They're asking for me, so I feel it's time."

Eddie grins, a plan immediately shaping up in his mind. "John," he says with a flourish, taking delight at the marten's reaction.

"You didn't need to ask me twice... not even once..." he points to the otter, snickering.

"Pinning people down for me is bread and butter as is, and I ain't pointing any fingers, but let's be honest. Chayne ain't got what it takes to be the Alpha for... a reason or two, and it's time he finally gets that in that bleached blonde head of his."

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

*"This duel with John is more so than just for a point, it is pretty much personal." *the marten is shown putting on his band* "I came here to prove I'm Alpha, and I know he doesn't respect me as is, but you know? Fuck him. I'm here to win, and I'm going to send him a clear message."*

~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

John and Chayne crash into each other, the stoat immediately dealing a blow to the marten and toppling him over. The bartender lunges for John's leg, but it is clear he has a lot less experience in actual grappling than the correctional officer. Without too many ceremonies, John manages to get a hold of Chayne's arm, holding the marten with his bulk as he pulls the black band off his bicep.

"Come on, cap!" Z incites Chayne, powerless as the stoat is clearly asserting his domination on the blonde-furred marten. Arron's paws are tightly clenched in a mute prayer, to no avail as John easily gets up off the ground and strolls to his corner with Chayne's band around his wrist. "And John scores for the white team, we're 3-1!" Ludwig says.

"Piece of cake," John scoffs, as his teammates immediately huddle around him to compliment him. As both mustelids went back to their corners, the stoat leans to talk not so discreetly to William. "You know how it is with them...just mess up their hair-dos a bit and the rest is easy..." he jokes. The weasel frowns disapprovingly, but keeps silent.

"Knock it off, man," Crispin chimes in, having overheard the jailer's remark.

"Come on, it's funny and true..." the stoat says between his snickering, barely able to contain himself, looking that Crispin and William were not budging. "Ah, will you lighten up for once..."

"I believe I've proven what was there ever since the beginning. We're like... narrowing the group to a few front-runners, and I think pretty boy here has missed his bus stop one too many times."

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

"Sure, yes, he got us the point, but John here won't make any friends if he keeps up with that fucking circus he has. He got the training and the skill, but his personality stinks all the way up to here. And around this bunch of badgers and polecats, it's a tall ordeal..."

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

"Okay, we're only got one matchup still to take place," Ludwig says. "Michael against Andrew, step up..." Wolverine and polecat walk forward in earnest - Andrew frowning as he takes notice of Michael's band, tied up around his impossibly meaty thigh. "It's gonna be a bitch to tear that thing off..." he motions to Chayne, as he gets ready just outside the black team's corner.

"Don't worry," the marten encourages him, softly patting his stomach. "If anything else fails, just go for his boxers..." he smirks.

**camera focuses on J.J. looking over to the dueling area on his bench* "Andrew may have surprised us on day one, but Michael now has free roaming space and he does look like he could eat him for breakfast. Then again, the 'rine looks like everyone here could be his breakfast. Fucking huge..."*

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

"Andrew, Michael... ready?" Ludwig calls, both mustelids grunting in confirmation. "GO!"

The young polecat fearlessly lunges at the wolverine, muscles tensing as they both tumble on the ground. Andrew ends on top of Michael, feet wrapping around the blacksmith's legs as he holds him against the ground - soon realizing his position makes it tough to make a move for the wolverine's band, as he's sitting over his midsection and unable to turn around to be able to slip it off. Michael takes advantage of his opponent's predicament, tightly clutching his arm and pulling off the black band inch after inch.

*"He got my band, but until he's under me, he can't go anywhere..." *the polecat's body tenses up as Michael manages to get a hold of the band, immediately balling it up in his fist* "It ain't over until either of us crosses the line."*

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

From his vantage position, Andrew manages to turn his torso enough to be able to grasp the wolverine's band, but he can't slide it down his leg without jumping off his body. As soon as he realizes what the polecat is trying to do, Michael begins jerking his legs to make him lose his grip. Caught off guard by the wolverine's thrashing and flailing, Andrew is thrown off his body like a

cowboy from a bucking bull. He manages to get a hold of Michael's arm, but the wolverine has succeeded in getting on his feet and is able to shake off the polecat without many ceremonies.

*"Took me little to realize Andy had no plan whatsoever. He jumped over me, wasted a lot of energies just to keep me down, and never stopped for a second thinking "maybe, just maybe, I gotta make a move for his flag". *the wolverine gets back to the white corner among the cheers of his teammates, his run slowed to a stroll as he crosses the line* "I let him believe he was in control, but newsflash... I was the one dominating him from start to finish."*

~Michael, 35, Wolverine, Blacksmith

"Alright, the white team is up 4-1...Chayne, your turn," Ludwig says. The marten turns towards his team, paws on his hips, debating the pros and cons of each choice.

"I don't want to put Kenneth back in because he went through a grueling duel and is still reeling from his loss. Z I don't wanna waste until we got no other chances left...it's either Arron or Andy, and I don't wanna rely on the badgers after they failed on me repeatedly."

~Chayne, 28, Beech Marten, Bartender

"Andy..." the marten whispers.

The polecat smiles, not giving his captain the time to expose his plan. "It's all good Chayne, I gotcha," he says, still brushing sand off his chest fur after his brawl with Michael. "Back in right away. Can do..."

Chayne still tries to justify himself. "They gonna send one of the otters, and I don't trust Ken or Arron to take them on again..." he says.

"I said it's all good," Andrew reassures the marten, giving him one last hug before stepping towards the field with a determined grin on his muzzle.

"I feel if you think about all the Alphas, the biggest personalities in the history of furkind - none of 'em refused to step up in a fight because he was tired from the previous one. It is my turn to rise to the occasion, I owe it to my team and above all, I can't disappoint Chayne."

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

**the badgers are shown, their mouth hung open in stupor as Andrew walks towards the field* "Is Chayne trying to lose on purpose or what? Andrew just lost against Big Mike, we need someone fresh to take on their best and... he chooses him AGAIN?"*

~Kenneth, 24, American Badger, Roofer/CrossFit Instructor

Eddie smirks again as he sees Andrew taking his spot. "We'll send Crispin," he tells Ludwig. "He won once, he can win it again..."

The polecat turns towards the group. "Crispin it is," he motions to the captain, the lutrine already jumping on the spot and shaking off his limbs in anticipation for another fight. "How the fuck do I get that thing from his rudder?" Andrew asks his team, careful not to be heard from his opponent.

"You got long arms," Arron gestures to Andrew. "Outreach, grab and snap..."

The polecat scoffs, unconvinced. "He can play keep-away like he did with ya, though..."

“Just pull it like a generator, dude,” Kenneth speaks up. Not wanting to show his nervousness Andrew cocks his head in agreement, getting into position with a menacing scowl on his face.

*“I got only one thing in mind...” *the polecat shoots Crispin a ‘come at me’ gesture, looking at him in determination* “Grab that rudder before he can grab your arm. Let’s do this.”*

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

“Andrew has balls, but those don’t win these kinds of things. Godspeed, good fortune... you are gonna need it.”

~Crispin, 29, European Otter, Bouncer

“Roadie versus bouncer, we got a blue-collar brawl set up here!” Ludwig announces, stepping close to the edge of the field to call the next round. “Andrew, Crispin... GO!”

Andrew dashes towards the otter at full speed, immediately diving for his tail and taking him by surprise as he topples him over. Crispin manages to keep the momentum of their combined fall and ends up over the younger mustelid, Andrew still clutching his rudder as if his life depended on it.

“He got the tail!” Arron exclaims excitedly. The otter is tearing through the polecat, tugging on his arm as hard as he can in order to free his appendage from Andrew’s vice-like grasp, but the youngster doesn’t relent. His paws hooked near the lutrine’s tail strap, he starts pulling on the band and sliding it down his muscular rudder, Crispin stiffening it to make it a tougher ordeal for the polecat. Eventually, Andrew realizes he can’t progress further, the otter holding him down and almost yanking his arm off as he’s pulled into the most uncomfortable position.

The lutrine is relentless in his quest and finally manages to break Andrew’s grasp on his rudder, although the elastic band has slipped down to its tip. He pounces onto the polecat’s chest, sweat dripping off his front and back as he flags his tail away from his opponent’s reach like he did in the previous match-up. The amateur fighter quickly swaps his strategy: he blocks the polecat’s arms with his hands and elbows, using his left paw to yank his band off as he keeps him pinned down with his body weight. He doesn’t realize, though, that his own band has slipped off his tail and is now lying on the sand, inches from both contenders.

“Andrew! He lost the flag!” Chayne screams as he motions to the polecat, unable to see the piece of clothing because of Crispin’s bulk obstructing his view. Andrew cocks his head, realizing what his team is hinting at, but unable to do anything about it. The lutrine pulls his band off with a final yank, immediately springing up and rushing towards his “home” - Andrew being unable to do much other than collect his opponent’s garment. As Crispin crosses the line, scoring the point for his team, the polecat is shown lying in the sand, his body completely covered in sand and sweat, arms tightly clutching the otter’s flag.

“And Crispin scores again!” Ludwig yells. “This is turning into a blowout!” The entire black team lets out a collective groan, ears drooping in dejection as they realize they’re standing a single point from defeat.

“You did good, Texas...” Arron says, earnestly, albeit sighing in frustration as the youngster rejoins his ranks.

“It sucks. I wanted to go there and make it like last time, and it just blew on my face. Shit...”

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

“So, Eddie... here’s where we’re standing at,” Ludwig recaps the situation. “White team is up, five to one. If you win the next round, you get a thousand bucks in your pocket and your entire team wins a pizza night,” he says. “Who are you sending to battle?”

The otter turns to his team, still undecided. “Who we feeling? John? Will?”

“Don’t you wanna finish them off, cap?” Crispin asks his buddy. “At this point, it’s like shooting a fish in a barrel...”

“We got time Cris, we got time...” Eddie nods. “Okay, got it,” he turns to Ludwig. “I’m picking William.” The weasel adjusts the hem of his white lycra leggings, taking a cue from Michael’s earlier boot as he wraps his band around his thigh.

Chayne looks back, knowing he can’t keep the badger off the field much longer. “I choose Kenneth...” he says half-heartedly.

“In the end, Kenneth is not paying off as expected, but come on - William is the lowest bar he could try to get. At this point if he loses, it would not be just on Chayne, but the entire badger squad. Arron, Ken, you can’t suck this much...”

~J.J., 25, Sea Otter, Construction Project Manager

“All set?” William and Kenneth nod, taking a running stance as they prepare to pounce. “GO!”

The two mustelids crash against each other, tumbling on the ground and sending a cloud of sand flying in all directions. Either by skill or sheer luck, Kenneth ends right over the weasel’s leg - his paws immediately latching onto the flag and working to pull it off. Realizing what the badger is trying to do, William immediately gets on all fours and starts pulling back towards his own corner, hoping to drag Kenneth with him, but to no avail as the white-and-black furred mustelid manages to take off the band and dashes in the opposite direction.

“Kenneth’s got the flag, can he bring it home?” Ludwig calls. William rushes behind Kenneth, managing to tackle him inches from the finish line and pinning him against the ground as he tries slipping the black band off the badger’s meaty bicep. “Not so fast!” Kenneth pushes back, managing to free a leg, immediately attempting to drag the weasel with him as he powers towards the line of sandbags. With one last effort, he reaches out of the field with his other arm, “touching down” with William’s flag tightly in his grasp.

“Kenneth scores for the black team!” the host exclaims as the weasel rolls off the badger’s body, cursing under his breath in Spanish. A large gash has opened in his lycra leggings, right where Kenneth clawed the band off him.

“It’s not a good look to be the two losses in a five-two effort. F...rick this, frick this... I’m pissed, but promised my kids I wouldn’t swear a ton. It just sucks...”

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

“Alright, I’m thinking about sending Z in,” Chayne tells his compatriots.. “He won his round before, so I reckon that’s just fair...you feel like heading in, Z?”

“One hundred percent, NYC. I’m in,” Zakee says, determined to help his team close the deficit.

“White team, who’s going to be?”

“Want in, cap?” Michael asks Eddie, clearly chomping at the bit to fight the loudmouth.

“You know what, Mike...” the otter bites his lip, a thought forming in his mind. “You can take the pig, dude. I’ll hold on for one of the badgers if things go for the worse.”

“Mighty wary of you to think they will...” the wolverine smirks.

The lutrine pats Michael’s back, reassuring him. “Got my full faith in ya, dude. Get in and bag it for us.”

*“I did want to go in and close it, but you know... in a sense, putting Michael in against Z can work in my favor. Let’s keep these burly guys on a good rep and play off as the smart general lining his troops. Plus, I do feel I could take Arron anyway, and pretty much know he’s the next choice. Pray tell I’m right, America?” *chuckles**

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

Wolverine and hog badger step to the edge of the field, menacingly growling at each other. “Greasy Z, Michael...” the host calls. “GO!”

The blacksmith immediately goes for the mechanic’s throat, tackling him hard and sending him rolling face-down in the sand. Before Z can get back up and make a move for his leg, Michael jumps on him and pulls his arms in a lock - the two contenders rolling around in the sand as they tangle with each other, neither wanting to give an inch to their opponent.

Eventually, the wolverine manages to block Zakee’s paws, the hog badger practically squealing as he tries to reach for the wolverine’s flag in vain. Michael’s ankles are wrapped around his opponent’s legs, keeping his feet still as well as impeding him access to his own band. It is clear Z is gassing out as he’s forced by the wolverine in a painful position, the mohawked mustelid almost unable to get air into his lungs and letting Michael easy access to his own flag. The blacksmith easily yanks away his opponent’s arm, wasting no time in retrieving the band and dashing towards his own corner.

“FUCK YEAH!” Michael roars as soon as he’s crossed the line, flexing his muscles with an angry scowl on his face as his entire team huddles around him in celebration. Chayne’s face falls, Arron looking away as Z is shown lying supine on the ground - his chest strongly heaving, dyed hair plastered against his scalp and caked with sand.

“Eddie’s squad wins the team challenge!” Ludwig declares, raising both paws, then motioning towards the otter’s corner.

“This totally makes up for the shitty first week, and who else but I gettin’ the MVP? The title is as good as mine and these guys won’t even see it coming...”

~Michael, 35, Wolverine, Blacksmith

In the middle of the celebration, Eddie ends up hugging Crispin, their shaven heads almost touching as they scream in each other’s face. “You’re an ass for not givin’ me the satisfaction to shame Ken real good,” the Navy veteran says in a joking manner. “Coulda voted for him as cap...”

“Does it matter?” Crispin asks, Eddie laughing. “Did I make the right call or what?” the otter makes sure his rudder bumps into Eddie’s leg.

“Alright, white team...” Ludwig says, as all contestants have taken their spot. “Congrats on winning this challenge, you fought like true warriors today and totally deserve what’s in store for you,” he continues, the team joining in a big cheer. “You all are safe from elimination AND about to enjoy a full-blown, Italian style pizza dinner. And of course, Eddie gets a thousand dollars cash tip,” he says, nodding to the beaming otter.

“Chayne, Andrew, Zakee, Arron, Kenneth, J.J., that’s it for you. You all will go to the individual tomorrow...”











“Man, I’m exhausted from today...” J.J. speaks as he stands up from the bench, drawing a laugh from the rest.

“...where you’ll have to fight against each other for a chance to survive. In the end, another player will be booted off this group of six and become the second eliminated of American Mustelid Alpha. Time to get to the Burrow, I’ll see you later...”

*“Losing again really sucks, brother. I pretty much am the top of the top of the Midwest, and everything I do, I pass with flying colors, but so far, I’m 0-for-2. *Arron is shown looking up dejectedly as he walks out* “But that doesn’t matter. I may have been left behind by my fellow competitors, but on my own, I’m still a beast to be reckoned with. As it says in Philippians, “I can do all through Him who gives me strength,” and these folks are gonna see it real soon.”*

~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

TEAM CHALLENGE #2, “Capture The Flag”

		ROUND		
1	 EDDIE	1	 KENNETH	0
2	 CRISPIN	2	 ARRON	0
2	 WILLIAM	3	 GREASY Z	1
3	 JOHN	4	 CHAYNE	1
4	 MICHAEL	5	 ANDREW	1
5	 CRISPIN	6	 ANDREW	1
5	 WILLIAM	7	 KENNETH	2
6	 MICHAEL	8	 GREASY Z	2

