



American Mustelid Alpha

EPISODE 7

"I Was Taught These Guys Got Feelings"

PART 2

As the jailer storms to his own room, it doesn't take long for the situation to be diffused. Having gotten the two feuding mustelids seemingly under control, the rest of the group is free to get to their own occupations - some people lounging outside, others in the main living room. One of the competitors approaches Z, who's sitting by himself in his room.

"Brother..." Arron prods the sulking hog badger. "I know it ain't the time or place, but... you feel like blowing off some steam in the gym?" he asks, holding a pair of boxing gloves. "Found these and some hitting pads in the storehouse... Been a while since I last did this, but it has helped me before, it can help you." Zakee only snorts at the honey badger in response; stoic, but seemingly open as he steps up and heads downstairs to the Burrow's home gym.

Soon the two mustelids have changed into their workout clothes, making the most of the empty room as they clear enough space to come up with a makeshift sparring ground. Arron tosses Z the gloves, instructing him to don them as he puts on his own pads. "Now come at me, move around as I go, then hit as soon as I flash you the pad, aight?"

"Back when I was a teen, my parents sent me to a boxing class as a way to keep me and my youthful impulses under control. I know it helped a lot, so I reckon that might do the trick with Zakee too."
~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

The honey badger holds the padding to which Z lunges uppercuts and straight jabs at with contained rage. "John's wrong for doing that, you know?"

“Tell me... about it,” the mechanic grunts, his fist cracking against the pad. “Why you and Ken keep enabling him is beyond me. Yanno... his place isn’t here, bruh,” he huffs. “If we talking about deserving, I think everyone gotta agree that he gotta go.”

Arron grunts in response as he takes the brunt of Zakee’s hits. “I think we all know he’s talented, that’s the thing. You picked him on challenge one...”

“And had to deal with that mighty asshole after we won,” the hog badger snorts.

“But if we going on judging, or on any other standards, doubt he gonna shine. He knows how to sell himself and blend in the background, but do you see him besting Ken, Drew, even us two?”

Zakee huffs, trying to hit a combination but only managing to scrape the edge of Arron’s mitt. “He still fucking has... four wins,” he frowns.

“Does it matter?” Arron asks. “All it takes is one loss. And it’s gonna happen sooner or later, he’s out of his league and pretty much the entire house has it against him...”

Zakee stops to take a breather, looking at Arron. “You say that, but y’all’s gonna keep coastin’ on him and all of this was for naught,” he snorts. “I reckon this is a butter-up, ‘Ron.”

“Whatcha mean, brother?” the honey badger eyes the mechanic, lowering his padded paws.

“I get it in the end...” Z shakes his head, tugging on his tank top. “Winnin’ at any cost, get to the next step, no matter what you say or what others preach. Like, it blows, but it’s how it is with dem shows.”

Arron raises a brow. “Nah, man,” he says. “I’m a badger of my word. I’m here to win, sure, but I want it to be against someone I respect, and I do respect ya.”

*“I know me and Zakee aren’t supposed to be on the same page, but... what John did to him was straight out inexcusable. The Lord taught us to...” *ponders for a second before quoting* “Love one another with brotherly affection, and outdo one another in showing honor.’ Well Zakee’s my brother, and I’m gonna do whatever in my power to make sure things are fine among the two of us. I don’t want to win this with underhanded tactics.”*

~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

The night is setting in, most mustelids peacing out and readying to go to bed, when Arron finally walks into his room - noticing Kenneth was changing and John sitting down and reading. The stoat perks up at the honey badger’s presence, him clearly fresh from his own training routine and out of the shower.

“Arron, you gotta stop training literally 24/7, live a little...” John quips. “You the only one going at this hour.”

The firefighter shrugs, changing into his underwear before plopping on the bed. “Gotta help out a pal, as well as keep in shape myself...” he casually mentions. “You know John, you gotta cut Zakee

some slack. I know you two don't see eye-to-eye, and I'm not asking you to be best friends with him or anything... but at least keep civil as you both in here," he says.

John scoffs. "If we're getting close to the end, it's best to keep competition at bay. It is what it is."

"Don't say it is what it is, cuz that basically means 'whatever, Arron' to me," the honey badger insists, the conversation picking up Kenneth's attention. "Having this feud going on is undermining your status in the Burrow, and at this point of the game, it can bite you back."

"Arron's a solid competitor, but to be frank, he's very insecure. Plenty people have played the game I do and have won as a result. But at this point in the competition, I'll just let Arron be Arron; and I doubt that at his level he has what it takes to go the distance."

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

"To be honest, Arron..." the stoat scoffs, letting his book fall on the bed as he turns towards the younger mustelid. "That level of holier-than-thou won't be cutting it when real money's on the line. This entire show is a power game and a quest for mustelid command. If I want him gone, I'll do whatever to make it happen, whether you like it or not," he says.

"Yeah, but you're fucking my game up, don't you get it?" The honey badger huffs, both of his roommates caught off by his atypical swearing. "If you're slinging mud, then you're gonna hit the only people who gave you a shot."

"On the contrary, bud... I'm doing the dirty work for you," John replies. "We said it over and over that this trio needs to stick together. What's the use in pretending otherwise at this point? Why the fuck you're offering him your paw in peace?"

"Cuz I know I'm not winning by playing dirty. You don't go taunting others in mental distress. In my job, that's a sad reality, and you provoking a man that's down is simply not morally right." Arron glares at the badger.

"Um... does this look like your fire station to ya?" John asks in a sarcastic tone. "What do you think you were signing up for? The world doesn't work that way, buddy," he says. "I know plenty of guys that claimed the same thing... you ain't distressing, you're just sad, you get up and take it like an Alpha. He ain't one."

"Now guys..." Kenneth intervenes, rubbing his temples as he sees Arron's body tensing up. "Let's not dig this deeper than what has happened." the badger says. "And John, you're two versus one here, you shoulda left it alone... but you chose your own path, and now we gotta work around it."

The stoat props himself against the wall, glaring at the badger. "So you're with goody-goody here?"

"I'm with normalcy here, but I digress," Kenneth replies. "You know what you did, and what you need to do. But if you don't, then you do you, I guess," he shrugs. "If you don't like it, go find someone else you can cling on to. 'Ron and I play it our way, take it or leave it."

**groans* "I knew this wasn't meant to go on all the way, but the last thing I wanted to do before a team challenge is to go scramble." *the three are shown tucking themselves in their beds* "If push comes to shove and we end up in individuals, then it's clear how the totem pole's painted. I doubt he can see it, though, but if he wants to play Mister Hardass, go off, bro, no fur off my back."*

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

March 10, 2020

11:00 AM

80° F

The six competing mustelids get out of the Burrow - sun shining down the premises as Ludwig waits from them on the front court, clad in his usual shirt and cargo pants combo. "Welcome back, guys..." he says, briefly smirking as the group takes place in front of him. "As you may see, Eddie is the sole mustelid immune right now, he will not compete in the upcoming challenge."

"Wouldn't have it any other way, boss," Eddie salutes back from the bench.

"So how's it going this morning? Ready to take on the next team challenge?" Ludwig asks the group. "Greasy Z, how you feeling now after yesterday?"

"Yanno, it's a progress," the hog badger explains. "When that shit happens, it ain't pretty, especially if there's some parts of the house that don't cooperate afterwards... But what happened happened, we gotta dive in what's next."

*"I had a moment yesterday where I was like... I don't fucking care anymore, I can just get up and leave. But there's people here I care for, and it's better to stay than give one bitch the satisfaction of me leavin', right?" *Z is shown as he beams at Ludwig, seemingly ready to go* "I wanna kill this more than ever now."*

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

"Clearly, as more and more people leave, some discussion on who you want to face at the end must be brewing up," the host points out. "John, do you think friendship bonds can help moving forward, or it's just every mustie for himself at this point?"

"I mean, you see Lieutenant water slinky there in the safe bench, don't you?" the stoat asks back, pointing towards Eddie. "In reality, it all just becomes a one versus one game, and teaming up has been a lot of luck of the hand you got handed to versus how much effort you put in to make due with what ya got. Sometimes you get a paper clip to escape a prison, sometimes you get an AR-15."

"Pretty vivid comparison..." Ludwig chuckles. "You're about to play a team challenge, though. How does that factor into this? Are teammates just props you need to further your own game? Kenneth?" he asks the badger, noticing he seems particularly eager to answer.

"You..." the badger sways in his spot. "...can but shouldn't say that," he states. "It ain't just kicking the chess table and seeing what falls where, but if we ain't leading and just demanding, what does that make us? I can say if I ever got treated like shit by an architect on the construction, then we cut the guy off and find another way."

"It's lucky that at least Kenneth seems to be in the right state of mind, so that's something we can count if we are able to be in the same team. I can see last week's win changed him up, so he has now developed into a strong, trustworthy badger brother."

~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter

“Finally, we move on to the mustelid of the hour,” the host says, pointing towards Eddie as the group politely claps along. “Eddie, you sunk your fangs into your opponent’s hearts as you conquered the challenge and a free pass to the next round,” Ludwig says with a smirk, the giant otter openly chuckling at his words. “Given you’d been dueling for a while here, do you think this can mark a new beginning for your game?”

“You never just begin again, Ludwig.” Eddie replies, his rudder twitching back and forth. “It’s all the path I need to take to go to the end, highs, lows, everything. What matters is that I won’t back down, and I’ll go at it whatever it yields and hey... this week, it yielded great shit.” he smirks.

“Alright, guys, I see you’re fully charged and ready to go...” the host says, propping up the usual bunch of black and white tees. “For today’s challenge, it’s time to get a little dirty. Muddy, even...”

Zakee’s expression turns from mildly wary to beaming in a second. “My kinda shit...” he openly chuckles, tongue running over his incisors.

“This game is called Muck About. You’ll be divided into two teams of three and play subsequent rounds, all together, trying to push a large wooden ball across a muddy field and inside your opponent’s goal. First team to get to three points earns safety from elimination, as well as a \$2000 tip for the winning captain, while the losers will all get to the final duel - for this occasion, a truel...” he chuckles, some of the players letting out a surprised gasp. “The loser of which will be the sixth fur eliminated from American Mustelid Alpha.”

“I’ve yet to land in any duel, and I don’t intend to today. It’s time to show that I can conquer this insane minefield and get myself into that final 6.”

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

“So, of course you are wondering how we're gonna pick captains today, right?” Ludwig asks rhetorically. “Well, I reckon it’s time to return to our old traditions. You all, Eddie included, are gonna vote on who you deem the worthiest to lead a team at this point of the game.” With a flourish, he starts distributing clipboards and pens to the whole group. “Remember, no talking to each other, and you can’t vote for yourself. Put down the name of the mustelid you feel is a better fit for leading your team in this particular challenge.”

Most competitors take their time to make their pick, darting glances around as they try to make eye contact with their opponents.

“As much as I love Z, he’s been captain three times already, and in a challenge that’s pretty much his element, I can’t let him take too much of the spotlight as less and less remain. I’m going for William because the badger versus Eddie feud can overshadow my efforts again. Plus, he’s the only sane one in the house, and I owe him my trust that much.”

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

*“I’m the only player left who’s never gotten a chance to lead, and I doubt this time it’ll be any different.” *scoffs* “For how it is, I need to favor the next best thing to happen, which is Kenneth leading again. You tried to play Mother Teresa, Arron, and guess what that gets you? Nothing.”*

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

“Alright, let’s see your choices. Z, who did you pick?”

The hog badger flips his board with a snort. “Andrew, easy. Good guys get rewarded.”

“Mhm,” the stoat host nods, turning towards the polecat. “Did you return the favor?”

The whole group gasps in surprise as the young roadie reveals his vote for William. “Z, you’re the best, but you got at it three times. Will needs this one,” he attempts to say convincingly, albeit shaking his head at being put in the spot - Z just shrugging his shoulders and chuckling in return.

“Arron?” Ludwig prods the firefighter.

“Kenneth. He got one win, he can get it again,” Arron says with a nod of his head, Eddie scoffing from his safe spot.

“No sense in pretending otherwise...” the roofer thanks his friend, turning his board to reveal his own vote for Arron.

*“Arron is my closest friend in here and I know that if he was to lead a team, I’d surely get on board and work together amazingly. If that’s an issue for someone...” *camera pans on Eddie* “...I know of a place where they can stick it.”*

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

“Eddie, you seem eager to say something, I sense...” Ludwig grins.

The giant otter puts up his paws. “I mean, Ludwig, at this point it makes no sense to keep the cards close to our chest. It’s obvious Kenneth and Arron are tight as shit. It’s also obvious I’m having none of that,” he says, flipping his board to reveal his vote for Andrew. “He can take ‘em down while I’m out.”

Before Ludwig could point to anyone else, William steps up as he also shows a vote for the young polecat. “I think it makes it clear who’ll be a captain, Lud...”

*“This is the final seven, these are the toughest, strongest mustelids in America, and I manage to get the most votes in an open ballot?” *Andrew steps forward, openly thanking the rest of the group before reaching Ludwig* “It took a while, but I’m starting to feel these people are considering me as a legit contender, and that’s amazing as is.”*












~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

“Andrew with three, that makes him a captain.” Ludwig states. “With one for Kenneth, one for Arron and one for William, one last vote to any of them will be a decider, else we will go to a tie-break. John, what is y-”

“Kenneth,” the stoat cuts the host’s spiel curtly, letting out a small smirk. Besides him, the badger beams up, thanking John with a flourish before joining Andrew next to Ludwig - not failing to shoot Eddie a grin of his own.

“Oh, huh? Nevermind, that’s just me doing what Eddie can’t do for the life of him and benefitting from my connections. I know I can win this again, I have to. Let’s make it two in a row.”

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

	ANDREW	3			
	KENNETH	2			
	ARRON	1			
	WILLIAM	1			

“So, guys... we got our two captains,” Ludwig addresses the group, pointing to Andrew and Kenneth standing besides him. “We tossed a coin to see who would get to choose team color and first pick. Kenneth won the toss,” he says. “So what will it be, Kenneth? Black or white?”

“I got a white winning shirt, let’s make a black winning one, alright?” the badger grins, picking up the heap of black shirts from the host’s paws.. “And I don’t think ya gotta ask twice for my first pick,” he winks.

“I’m not, but it is a formality...” Ludwig says with a chuckle.

Kenneth tosses back his hair and beckons the honey badger firefighter to join him. “Arron... help me rock this joint, will ya?”

“You bet,” Arron says, walking up to his friend and immediately going to bump fists.

“Ludwig...” Andrew interrupts the host, who just takes the big personalities flaring up at once. “You don’t need to ask me either. The good thing about not voting for him is that I can get another Texan on my team. And if there’s a challenge made for him, this is the one...” he says with a shrug. “Z, come on over!”

*“Ken and Arron can’t be the only dynamic duo in this bitch, can they?” *crosses his arms, looking straight into the camera**

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

“With numbers this small, we are already at our last pick,” Ludwig recaps. “Kenneth, your choice. If you pick John, William will end by default on Andrew’s team, otherwise it’ll be the stoat teaming up with him and Greasy Z,” he says, turning towards the badger, then to the two remaining mustelids. “Who do you want?”

Kenneth seems to struggle over the decision, pondering for a long time as his eyes dart back and forth between the remaining two.

*“This is of the times you gotta make the hard calls in life. Do I want to pick John and risk my rep, and maybe get in ‘Ron’s bad side? Do I pick Will knowing it’ll basically be throwing those two into a shithole and make it worse?” *the badger is shown talking it out with Arron* “This could make or break my quarter million dollar goals...” *sighs**

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

The badger looks up, his paws on his hips and his head lowered. "Ludwig, sometimes ya just gotta watch for your fellow mustelid. And I know it won't be pretty for these two to be together in the same room, much less the same team... so for that reason, I'm going with Blake."

At the badger's words, John lets out a smirk before joining the couple at the host's left. "So, we got our teams. Kenneth, Arron and John on the black team, while Andrew, Greasy Z and William will join forces on the white team," he says, as the weasel shakes paws with the two Texans.

"Would have picked you anyway," Andrew nods, tossing the last white shirt to the Honduran weasel.

"Cuz you can't pick a winning team to save yourself, eh?" John jabs the opposing captain.

Andrew peers at the stoat, rolling his eyes as he crosses his arms. "Cuz this team don't gag on pussy."

The mustelids in the white team let out a loud whistle at the young polecat's taunt. "Kid's got himself some balls..." Eddie says casually.

John turns abruptly towards the otter, incensed to see him taking the youngster's side. "Don't go there, you..."

"Enough with that, guys," Ludwig warns both sides, shutting down the confrontation. "Leave the aggression for the challenge, will ya?" he asks. "Get changed in your challenge gear and meet me out to the mud field in fifteen minutes. Y'all ready to go?"

The entire group roars in approval, before starting to head back towards the Burrow's lockers - the camera panning out as they walk away.



The camera zooms into the challenge area, a huge rectangular field demarcated by sandbags and filled with thick, wet, sticky mud - two huge goals painted with the team's colors at opposite sides and a big wooden ball standing in the center. Z is openly grinning as he walks along the field, already anticipating the fight that is about to take place.

*"We going from something that's outta my comfort zone to something that's up my fucking alley, baby!" *camera focuses on the hog badger, bouncing in his spot* "Bet these guys haven't gotten muddy any day of their lives, while for me this is like water to an otter. I am at a big advantage here, and we gonna take this, even if we ruin dem white tees in the process."*

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

"Alright, guys, you know the rules," Ludwig warns both sides, as the mustelids shed their shirts, shorts and shoes and step into the thick mud clad in their respective swimsuits. "On my go, you gonna dash forward and try pushing that ball into your opponent's goal, while at the same time trying to prevent them from doing the same. First team to score three points wins the challenge," he says. "Anyone got questions before we kick it off?"

"Anyone else worried about John never being white again after this?" Andrew asks out loud. The mustelids snicker at the youngster's taunt - Z letting out a large snorting chuckle, even Kenneth and Arron trying to hide their amusement.

"Keep pushing your luck, kid..." the jailer answers, struggling to make his way through the muggy field as he positions himself on the side of his goal. "See if you gonna act smartass again after eating a mouthful of mud..."

*"I've won more team challenges than you kid, don't go finding your attitude at this point in the game." *John is shown bumping fists with Kenneth and Arron, putting on his game face before the first round is set* "With these badgers behind me, I'll make damn sure one of the Texan fellas goes down, plain and simple."*

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

"Both teams ready?" Ludwig calls out, all six mustelids grunting in determination.

"Wait, Lud..." Eddie exclaims, stopping the weasel before he can call the start. "Can I do the honors for once?" he asks with a smirk. "It's bad enough that I don't get to take part in the big mud fight..."

Ludwig laughs. "That wasn't on the reward package, but I don't see the problem. Just make sure to do it right."

"Oh, don't worry about that..." the giant otter chuckles, before getting up from his bench and taking a few steps forward to the edge of the mud pit. "YOU GUYS READY?" he says in his deep, booming voice, lifting an arm in the air before giving the signal. "GO!"

All six players dash through the mud, Zakee being the first to reach the ball and give it a tentative push towards the black team's end zone. Kenneth and Arron are quick to push back, muscles straining against the heavy sphere as more players join the effort, trying to get it to tilt ever so slightly towards their goal. Eventually, Z is the first to break ranks, leaving his team's side and tackling Arron.

"Z takes Arron down, HARD!" Ludwig yells, as the firefighter has little time to react as he gets steamrolled by the hog badger, pouncing him into the thick mud. They toss and twist, muscled bodies heaving and shifting, the honey badger quickly getting back on his feet but getting taken down again by his opponent.

"John!" Arron yells, poking his head out of the mud. "Do something!"

The white stoat shifts his focus from the ball, walking around it to grab William's midsection and push him away. The weasel flails against the jailer's body, both mustelids shoving each other and ultimately falling sideways beneath the mud.

Arron twists free from Z's grip as he slithers from the left, standing up. "No, don't let go of the ball, John!" the honey badger growls as Andrew gets a hold of the ball, the lithe polecat outpacing Kenneth in the heavy, muddy walk as he pushes slightly to his right - earning inch after inch as the badger's paws keep sliding back, struggling to get a grip on the slippery ground.

*"I've no idea what John's doing. You can't let the ball go if you're the only one in the vicinity! Don't give us problems, give us solutions!" *the honey badger pinches the bridge of his nose, groaning*
~Arron, 28, Honey Badger, Firefighter*

Eventually, Arron manages to get back in the action, eluding Zakee's guard to go help Kenneth survive the brunt of Andrew's attack. The ball has already moved one quarter of the way down the field as the firefighter joins his friend by pushing back, Andrew starting to struggle under the two badger's combined push. "The black team's back in this!" Ludwig announces, as the ball starts to move imperceptibly towards the white team's goal.

"Not so fast!" Zakee snarls as he takes charge of the captain of the opposite team - the mechanic moving like an otter in water, twisting and turning to make Kenneth lose his balance. The roofer has little time to realize what is going on as he's dunked by the hog badger, mud flying in all directions as the two mustelids growl and claw at each other in order to overpower their opponent.

As four of the players are seemingly entangled in a struggle for dominance, Andrew is quick to stop the badgers' momentum and give a strong push towards the goal. Arron's footpaw slips for a second, the firefighter falling to one knee and almost under the heavy ball as Andrew pushes with all his might - driving it to his opponent's left and back towards the goal to score the first point of the challenge.

"White team scores the first point!" Ludwig exclaims. Behind him, Eddie grins, nodding knowingly.

"John, I... told you to not let go of the ball!" Arron says pointing at the stoat, between heavy panting. "Never leave the ball alone!"

The stoat gets back to his feet, his white coat mostly matted by the mud. "Tell it to your buddy who got schooled by a kid..." he says as he points towards Kenneth.

"Hey, you were too busy trying to peg someone to the darn corner!" Kenneth bares his fangs, stepping up from the muggy ground - his long, dark hair fully caked with heavy, brownish clay after the savage tussle with Z.

"Then I don't know what you want me to do, do I defend or score for all of you?" John exasperatedly asks, wiping mud from his face.

*"Kenneth's team has everyone going at each other's throats, and that's exactly what I want to see at this point in the game." *Camera focuses on Andrew's group catching a second wind* "If they keep it like that, then one of their asses is going home, and I, personally, can't wait any longer for that."*

grins

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"Alright, we're ready for round two!" Ludwig announces, all mustelids tensing up and ready to pounce as they hold against the goal posts. "Y'all ready? GO!"

The six competitors drive forward yet again, John immediately dropping ranks to go tackle Z and prevent him from reaching the ball. Not expecting the stoat's attack, the hog badger faceplants in the mud as Kenneth and Arron get hold of the wooden sphere at the same time, the full force of their impact setting Andrew and William back as the two badgers start building a nice momentum.

"The black team is gaining ground!" Ludwig comments, Eddie's features curling in a frown as Zakee tries to get free from John's grasp and reach the ball - managing to put both his paws on it before getting dunked again by the jailer.

"We gotta disable their best player. Let me do the dirty work while you two hopefully drive the score up."

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

"Go get Kenneth!" Andrew commands William. "Or any of the two!" The weasel doesn't need to be told twice, dropping the ball to wrap his muscular paws around the roofer's slippery midsection. Kenneth flails for a bit, trying to hang on, but his opponent eventually manages to take him down - the weasel's muddy tail wrapping around the badger's leg as the two roll away from the action.

Andrew begins to gain momentum, and pushes the ball towards the goal once again, but suddenly, he feels a tug on his bicep - John having left Zakee for one second to try shaking the polecat off the action.

"Get off now!" John growls to Andrew, as Arron manages to regain control of the ball. The polecat struggles to get a grip on the jailer's slippery body, soon getting taken down himself while the firefighter resumes pushing towards the goal. Kenneth is quick to reach him, leaving William in the dirt as he runs to his friend's side - Z managing to replace Andrew on the other side of the ball, but getting easily overpowered by the two badgers' combined effort as they cover the last stretch and score the point.

"The black team scores, we got a tied game!" the host yells, Arron and Kenneth sharing a muddy hug as their opponents lay defeated.

"What do we do, cap?" Z asks Andrew, brushing mud off his eyes and muzzle with a paw. "I can't hold all of 'em down at once..."

Andrew huffs, trying to not show any overwhelming his mind could concoct. "They're going for you first, keep on the ball, don't give them a chance. W-Will, be Z's ears and eyes."

"Yeah, but..." the hog badger frowns. "They're taking to the mud better than I thought, if I let you have at 'em I'll have to face two of 'em on the ball," he ponders. "I think it's better if I go for one of the three and try to keep him out of the action for good."

"I rather you on your feet than incapacitated. They gonna pile up two to one if they need to," Andrew states.

"Andrew's right," William says. "Plus, he got the stamina to tire John and Arron for you, yeah?"

"You bet," the polecat says confidently, adjusting his swimsuit. "Let's go get them, aight?"

"It's both a blessing and a curse to be entrusted to lead a team. One single gambit, one wrong decision can send us to that immunity or get one of us sacked. One thing for sure, they won't relent against Z, and everyone and their mom knows this is his element, so they gonna try to fuck him over."

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

"GO!"

At Ludwig's signal, the contestant dash once more towards the ball - heavily colliding against the sphere as they try to exert the strength they need to push it towards their opponent's goal. It's Andrew's turn to get muddy, the young polecat following the concerted plan as he wraps his arm around Kenneth's chest and pushes him down without too many ceremonies. The roofer flails aimlessly in the muck, trying to use its slipperiness in his favor to avoid Andrew's grasp, but the roadie exploits his bigger reach to shove him back in the mud and keep him pinned.

As Zakee attempts to get a hold of the ball and push John's and Arron's paws away, the jailer sees it as an occasion to take the hog badger away from the heated strife. His muddied features contract in a grin as he hooks both paws around Zakee's arms, trying to wring him away from the ball and leave Arron facing William. Sensing the jailer's lunge, the hog badger starts flailing his arms in order to get free - accidentally elbowing the stoat's head in his quest to get away from his grasp.

The force of the impact is enough to knock John out for a second. He spits out a glob of mud before yelling towards the hog badger. "What's the big fucking idea?"

Z huffs, ignoring what he thought was just John trying to get under his skin, still not realizing what just happened. He manages to get ahold of the ball, and starts to make force against Arron before the stoat lunges at him a second time - this time succeeding in wrestling him away from the ball and to the ground. The two mustelids trade heavy blows as they grapple in the mud, the honey badger exploiting the opening to push hard against William and start gaining ground.

*"I knew Z was gonna pull this shit once again!" *growls* "First on the water challenge he fucks my hand up and now this? It's on!"*

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

As in the previous rounds, most of the action takes place far away from the ball. Kenneth and Andrew are still tangled with each other, both mustelids nearly unrecognizable as their bodies are smeared with a thick, heavy coating of slippery mud. John uses all of his might to keep Z from reaching the ball, adrenaline spiked up by the earlier blow the hog badger dealt him. Unaided by his teammates, William tries to hold his own against Arron, but eventually succumbs to the honey

badger's superior strength as his paws start slipping back - his opponent driving the ball into the goal with a grunt and a heavy push of his massive shoulders.

"Arron scores again, the black team's ahead two to one!" Ludwig exclaims, Arron openly celebrating with an animalistic yell as John signals for the host to step in, letting Zakee go as soon as he realizes his team got the point.

"What's up, John?" the stoat asks, noticing John is trying to get his attention. "Something wrong there?"

"Can you get a fucking replay here? This pig fucking banged my head!" John points at Zakee, accusing him.

"Uhm, what?" the hog badger scoffs, still lying in the mud. "You hooked my arms in a fucking nelson! Maybe your head's on the way and you need to watch it!"

John starts to step towards the hog badger, dragging his feet across the mud. "No, you watch your own fucking business, you panicky fool!"

William attempts to block the stoat's way. "It was an accident. Drop it."

John opens his mouth, ready to retort, but then nods to the weasel. "Aight," he scoffs, shooting Z a murderous glance. "But this stinker better keep his promise to stay away from me."

Kenneth groans. "John, just can your muzzle and focus..."

"Hey, you weren't fouled by the hick over there! I have a right to not take any shit!" the stoat growls at his captain, pointing a muddy finger at him.

"You can take it against each other when we go back to the Burrow with this in the bag," the badger scoffs, stumbling across the thick muck as he tries to walk back to his post.

*"I'm getting through this challenge with mud, testosterone and Badger Jesus..." *camera points at Arron* "I only need one point and I can call this a day, maybe call this alliance quits if it's already that spoiled. Guys, let's keep it together for literally two minutes..."*

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

"Alright, so here's where we are, guys..." Ludwig recaps. "Team Black is up 2-1, they need one more point to win this challenge. If White gets the next one, we going to the decider instead," he says, all mustelids nodding along. "Y'all ready? GO!"

The six competitors sprint towards the center of the field, their bodies completely caked in mud by this point as they heavily tackle the ball. This time, Kenneth is the first to get physical, leaving Arron and John to shoulder the white team's impact as he takes down Andrew. The polecat barely has the time to react as the badger's strong paws wrap around his waist, tearing him away from the ball and dunking him into the muck.

"The two captains are going for the jugular!" Ludwig exclaims, as Andrew shuffles against Kenneth and wraps his tail around the badger's leg - the swift motion putting him on top, leaning against his opponent's back and pushing his head down on the yielding mud. Kenneth strains under the

polecat's body, his muscles tensing as he tries to wrangle out of the uncomfortable position, but the exertion of three highly contested rounds is clearly getting to him.

Amidst the chaos, Zakee and William take the opportunity to push the ball towards the opposite goal - their bodies sore and their muscles straining to get that chance to tie. Feeling his paws starting to slip and his shoulders trembling with the effort of holding the white team away, John grunts and turns towards Arron. "Handle William," he quietly motions to the honey badger, letting go of his position with sights set on the mohawked mechanic.

"I've been waiting a long time to do this..."

~John, 36, Stoat, Jailer

With a menacing cry the jailer heavily digs into Zakee's body, shouldering the hog badger and taking him down as he still clings on the ball. It is enough to stop the white team's progress, both mustelids trading blows on the ground in a heated tussle - the stoat soon managing to pin down his rival and take him out of the equation. Arron takes the cue to push decisively against William, starting a momentum in the opposite direction as the action slowly slips away from the brawling mustelids.

Meanwhile, Kenneth has managed to escape Andrew's submission, getting to one knee as the polecat clings to his legs with all the strength left in his body. As soon as he gets up, his opponent does the same, holding on the leg and thwarting his balance to make him fall in the mud again. The badger uses his upper paws to pull himself back and forth, but the polecat doesn't let go of his limb.

Minutes pass as the round gets into a stalemate, the contestants' energies winding down as they brawl in the mud like wild gators - limbs tangled up and holding onto dirty, slippery fur with all of their might to not let any opponent escape. Andrew is holding Kenneth, John is holding Z, Arron and William are left pushing on the ball in the middle of the field - neither managing to make progress as their breaks become longer and longer, eyes scanning the other's to find a trace of weakness.

The hog badger thrashes his body in an attempt to break from the stoat's grasp, noting how close Arron is to their goal. "Will, hold on!"

"Oh no, you don't!" John growls, his paw moving as swiftly as it can in the mud, striking Zakee's cheek in a swift slap before he stands up and goes towards the ball. The hog badger shrieks in pain, immediately feeling the sting of the stoat's blow.

"You bastard!" he yells, turning towards the host to make sure he saw the illegal contact, as he coughs up mud he inhaled from the shock. "Lud, he fucking slapped me!"

Having noticed John's dirty blow, Ludwig is quick to sound off his air horn and stop the game - all mustelids stopping in their tracks and turning around to figure out what went through. "John, you can't hit your opponent like that," the host addresses his fellow stoat, who's clearly seething as Greasy Z shoots him a murderous look - the medical team stepping him and quickly medicating the spot where John's claws broke through the hog badger's skin. "Brawling's fine, but low blows like that are not allowed. Consider this a warning, dude... the next time, I'm giving the point to the white team."

"John, what was that?" Arron exclaims in anger. "I had that in the bag!"

“Call it retaliation,” the stoat scoffs, nonplussed. “He fucking elbowed me in the head, but he can’t take a blow without calling the rulebook. Fucking bogus...”

“If you cost us a point, I’ll make sure you remember that on the way out,” Arron hisses.

“Everybody shut up!” Kenneth calls for his teammates. “Hold it together for one point and that’s it...”

Both the white team and Eddie are looking at the black team unraveling in front of their eyes, as William walks towards the two Texans. “You okay, Zakee?” he asks, noticing the povidone-iodine stain on the hog badger’s cheek.

“As I’ll ever be,” he grunts. “But the stoat better shove his claws up his fucking ass or I’ll make sure I will.”

**camera focuses on the onlooking otter* “This is chaos. Kenneth’s team is at one inch of maiming itself, and it may be the final nail in the coffin for the black team. I’m hoping Andrew and the guys can pull it off and send the black team where it deserves.”*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

All mustelids put their paws on the ball, the round deemed to resume from where it was when it got stopped. “You ready?” Ludwig calls. “GO!”

The game resumes, everyone pushing with redoubled strength in a bid to get the sphere to tilt in their direction. This time, nobody’s losing their grip on the ball’s surface, the battle soon shifting as the players get locked in one-on-one tussles at opposing angles.

Anxious to avenge John’s earlier blow to his friend, Andrew manages to get a hold of his thigh - kneeling among his legs to force the jailer in a position that makes it very difficult to push. Arron is keeping Z occupied, leaning against the hog badger’s back as they both hang against the ball, leaving Kenneth free to tire William further as he exerts all of his might on the weasel. Slowly but surely, the white squad starts to slip - Kenneth gaining inch by inch as his team’s heavy hitters manage to keep Z and Andrew busy.

Sensing William’s struggle, the young roadie drops John to help his friend with the pushing. Kenneth’s momentum stops to a halt as he’s forced to undertake the combined brunt of both mustelids, but the white team’s joy is short lived as John recovers and forcefully takes down Andrew - Arron finally managing to wrestle Z away from the ball, both his arms wrapped around the hog badger’s upper chest as he drags him further away from the action.

A loud roar escapes Kenneth’s throat as he pushes against William with everything he’s got left. The personal trainer’s feet start sliding back on the mud, the personal trainer looking around in terror realizing he’s about to get overpowered. “Guys, help!” he calls out, struggling to hold in the badger’s fury as the ball hovers close to the black team’s goal.

Noticing his friend is about to overpower the weasel, Arron abruptly drops Z and sashes back towards the ball. He reaches it before the hog badger, adding to Kenneth’s push as they both drive William and the large sphere in the goal to score the last point.

“AND THE BLACK TEAM WINS IMMUNITY!” Ludwig yells, the badgers immediately hugging in relief - snouts buried in each other’s muddied fur as they rest against each other and celebrate their victory.

“Fuck me sideways...” Eddie says to himself, clearly frustrated as he tenses his fists.

*“I’m two for two, baby! All I’ve strived for ever since I got in the Burrow is coming back at once. No matter how these people will keep throwing spanners in the works, I’m gonna steamroll through ‘em until I’m on top.” *smiles* “The otter thought he was the cock of the walk after guzzling down all that shit, but I took little time to put him back in his place.”*

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

Team Challenge #6, “Muck About”

				ROUND				
0		KENNETH ARRON JOHN	1		ANDREW GREASY Z WILLIAM	1		
1		KENNETH ARRON JOHN	2		ANDREW GREASY Z WILLIAM	1		
2		KENNETH ARRON JOHN	3		ANDREW GREASY Z WILLIAM	1		
3		KENNETH ARRON JOHN	4		ANDREW GREASY Z WILLIAM	1		

Ludwig turns towards the two teams, fur still caked with mud and sweat as they face the host. “Black team, congrats for winning this challenge. You’re safe from elimination for this round, and you’ve earned your captain Kenneth a thousand dollar cash tip,” he says, the badger eagerly smiling at his words. “While Andrew, Zakee, William... you’ll be facing each other in the next duel, where another one of you will ultimately be booted from the Burrow and become the sixth eliminated of American Mustelid Alpha.”

John is openly beaming, looking down at his defeated opponents. “And you all thought I had to go home...” he grins.

Andrew can’t help but shed a few tears, hoping beyond himself they were disguised by the mud on his muzzle. “It’s not fucking fair, guys...” he mouths to his teammates.

“I think I’m gonna throw up,” Zakee grunts, a disgusted look on his face as the jailer keeps gloating. “I really... don’t want to duel you two. I don’t wanna do this... the fuck?”

William raises his shoulders. “We should have won, it just wasn’t our turn. But it’s fine,” he states, as calm as he could muster.

“No it ain’t fine for one of us three to go while that fucker laughs about it!” the hog badger loudly huffs, struggling to contain his anger.

“Whoever of us three stays, we gotta promise to keep our head high and make sure the right mustelids keep going in this race,.” William nods, shooting a knowing look at his teammates.

"Y'know..." Andrew says. "We will. But warn that I will do whatever it takes to stay, and I want you to do the same."

Zakee looks up, still despondent. "This shit still ain't fair..." he mutters, resting his head on his hand.

"This sucks major balls. Blake and the badgers shoulda been down here. This is a fucking mess..."
sighs heavily

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

It's late in the afternoon when Ludwig greets the contestants at risk within the confines of the challenge area, the whole group having washed up and changed into clean clothes after their earlier mud tryst. Eddie, John, Arron and Kenneth take place on the winners' bench, the giant otter and the badger roofer sitting at opposite ends.

"Welcome to the final challenge left between you and the final six. Andrew, William and Greasy Z..."

"It's scary to be this close to elimination. Looking at my two opponents, Z was named the best of the top 12 next to me, and Andrew has grown a lot in this competition. It hurts that it's against those two, but... I don't want to go home."

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"So, against all odds, bickering and calls, Kenneth, John and Arron reach the top six." Ludwig says to the mustelids, Eddie rolling his eyes at the comment. "Kenneth, your fortunes seem to be turning around as of late - you've won an individual challenge and two team challenges in a row. What are you making of it?"

"Makes up really well for all them first weeks..." Kenneth chuckles. "This is the momentum I need to keep going. It ain't always easy to come on top when you have to deal with a team of five or six, but as numbers dwindle, I think there's no doubt that I can lead and exceed."

*"At this point, man... I'm just letting the badger yap. He won a few, so what's the big deal? A buncha people here did too, and we're not rubbing it in everyone's face like he's been doing." *Eddie is shown ostentatiously watching away as Kenneth keeps talking* "His time will come, you can bet on it. When he least expects it, otter's gonna creep up on him and..." *makes snapping motion**

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

Ludwig looks at the three competitors remaining. "Zakee. We know it's been a heavy set of days. How are you holding up?"

"First ya got my mind and now my pride at losing at a mud challenge." the hog badger shrugs. "But nobody said this would be easy, and we all want to reach the end, to the title, the *dye-neero*..."

"Dinero..." William corrects the mechanic with a chuckle.

"Well that," Zakee quips, "...that this thing has waitin'. It hurts that I'm going against these two outstanding fellas, though..."

“What about you, William?” the host turns his attention to the Honduran weasel. “After your exploit on the obstacle course that got you here, you’ve sorta blended in the background. Are you afraid that might hurt your Alpha credentials?”

“You know how it is, Ludwig,” the eloquent weasel explains. “I’m a working dad of five and most of these guys have not reached that stage of life yet. But it would be a mistake to pretend being quiet means not being Alpha. I could be loud, stir shit, bicker or whatever, but that’s not me. But what I am is determined to stay.”

“I do realize that there’s not much wiggle room left in here, we’re down to the cream of the crop and people might be starting to point at me as easy pickings. But I still got the thought of my family pushing me forward towards the ultimate goal - I’m here for that big prize, and if I gotta thwart some of these people’s dreams on the way there, so be it.”

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

“Alright, guys... time to face today’s duel, or in this case... today’s truel,” Ludwig smirks at the nervous trio. “This challenge is called Hole In The Wall, and will mostly test your agility, strength and tenacity.” The host points at three wall-like structures standing in the middle of the arena. “On my go, you’re gonna make your way up this drywall, climbing up to 20 feet by punching and kicking holes big enough to hold your weight. First one to reach the bell on top and ring it saves himself from elimination, while the other two will have to play a second round... where the bell will be placed ten feet higher and the walls will be thicker.”

**the polecat is shown gearing up with proper helmets and braces* “I’ve never been in the bottom two before, hell, neither Z nor William....” *hunches* “I don’t want to duel against Z or William, failing them as a captain is already fucking with me as is.”*

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

*“I feel pretty darn confident about this challenge. Obstacle courses often involve climbing up and over walls, and even though this is more strength-based, I know I can hold my own against Drew and Will.” *the hog badger absentmindedly bites the strap of his helmet as he awaits for Ludwig to call out* “I’m gonna prove Blake that I belong here as much as he does... Hell, even more so than him.”*

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

Andrew huffs, looking down, a despondent look in his face. “I don’t want to do this, not against you...” he mouths off, looking forlorn. “I didn’t want to place y’all here, but...”

“Hey Andrew,” William turns towards the polecat. “It’s fine. We were gonna fight each other at some point, you know...” he says.

The young roadie shakes his head. “Ugh...Still, it shouldn’t have been like this.”

“Drew, remember... Texas strong,” the hog badger snorts, giving a playful punch at the youngster’s arm.

“Texas strong...” Andrew nods back half-heartedly.

“Alright, guys... are you ready?” Ludwig asks the three, walking down the line as they nod their approval. “GO!”

Polecat, hog badger and weasel tackle the walls with astounding force, starting to elbow the cardboard in order to chip away enough material to get a solid hold for their handpaw to fit in.

"Instantly, my paws are on fire. My whole body hurts from trying to punch this wall up, but I'm not ending in that duel."

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

Fueled by encouragement, Andrew is quick to pull himself up a few inches - the roadie digging his fists repeatedly into the wall to carve out bigger holes.

*"I'm not going at this with a strategy, like, my strategy is to head up as quickly as I can and get to ring that bell before these other two." *Andrew darts a look to his right, noticing Zakee is nipping at his tail* "I got no choice but to win this."*

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

"Z has the lead..." Kenneth says to Arron. "Think he can do it?"

"It's between him and William. Andrew's looking frazzled," Arron nods. Indeed, the polecat is clearly starting to tire out, his grip on a foothold failing him for a second.

"Shit, no!" the roadie screams, starting to fall from nipping at Zakee's heels to lose half of his ascent. He manages to stick his hand in a carved hole and stop himself from a total progress loss, immediately starting to climb back up his previous dents to make up ground.

"Goddamnit..." Kenneth groans, resting his head on his paws, looking down at the scenario.

Above him, Greasy Z and William are locked in a head-to-head, the two mustelids going at the wall with newfound determination as they see the bells hovering over them. The weasel redoubles his motions, trying to stretch out his body enough to reach the bell, but he comes a few inches short. Taking it as his cue to step it up, Zakee punches another hole in, then he pulls himself up while holding onto it with his left hand - making good use of his bigger reach to pound the bell in with a swift jab of his gloved paw.

"Zakee wins the first round!" Ludwig exclaims, the hog badger shaking a fist in triumph as he pulls himself down the wall.

From the bench, John is left somewhat literally slack-jawed at the hog badger saving himself. "He's a fucking cockroach!" he says to Arron next to him, in disbelief. "I told you, I think he played his acting cards."

"He's gonna get all of us if we let him..." the honey badger shrugs, raising a brow as Z goes shaking paws with both Andrew and William and wishing them luck.

"Then I'm not going to," John says as he changes his expression back to his stoic self.

*"This morning, I was ready to leave this Burrow for good. But I stuck to my guns, drove it into sixth gear and now I'm looking at the rest from the top." *the hog badger reaches the rest of the safe mustelids on the winners' bench* "Chalk it to a lesson learned, guys. I'm in for the long haul!"*

~Greasy Z, 29, Hog Badger, Automobile Mechanic

Zakee huffs as he sits by the other safe mustelids, production coming in to replace the ruined cardboard. "It just feels... so fucking great to avoid this elimination-"

"Shit, Z, you're bleeding all over!" Eddie exclaims, inching away from the seat next to the hog badger

"Wait... am I?" Zakee asks, quite confused.

"Look at your paw, dude," Kenneth points out. The mechanic looks down to find the right side of his shirt stained a purplish color, more notable than the regular blue of the gear they were using. Further inspections reveals that he's bleeding profusely from a cut on the back of his right paw - the pain not having kicked in yet due to the adrenaline rush provoked by the extreme competition.

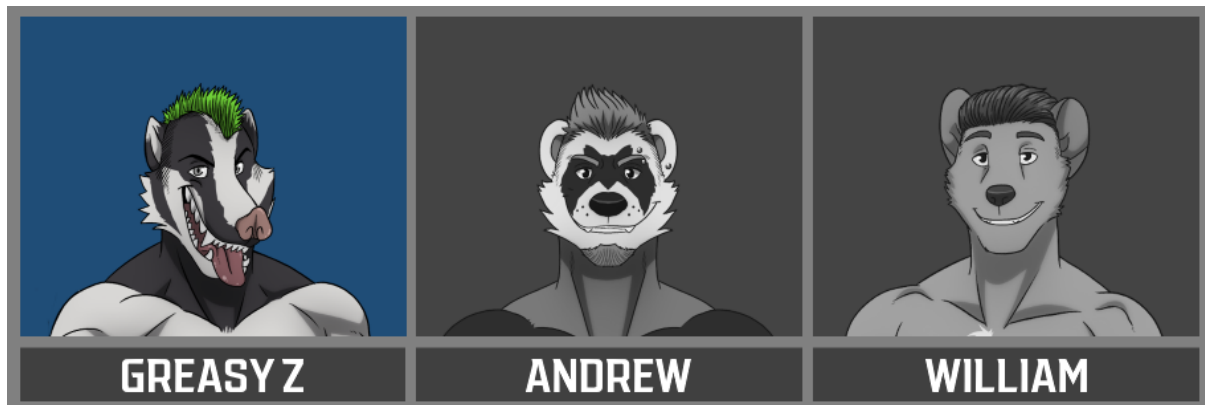
Ludwig walks over to the bench. "Zakee, you better get your paw looked at," he frowns, noticing the deep gash with a slight grimace. Soon the medical team is on his side, wiping the blood away and disinfecting the wound with a soaked cloth.

"I'm fine, guys. It just looks mighty scary," the hog badger oinks, wincing at the sting of the antiseptic.

*"By this point we're sort of used to Z having little care for his safety, and I'm not surprised he shrugged off that cut like it was nothing." *the lutrine looks intently as Dr. Paul wraps up the hog badger's paw* "I've seen a lot of wounds in the military and man, did that wound look pretty hardcore... I hope it doesn't hinder him too much."*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

Duel #6, "Hole In The Wall" – First Round



"Andrew and William... Tonight, you two are up for elimination," Ludwig addresses the two competitors once the cardboard has been replaced and Z's paw has been treated. "If you want to join those guys into the final six..." he says, pointing towards the other five, "...you gotta reach the top first."

The weasel and the polecat nod along, furrowing brows as they see the bells having been pushed to the very top of the wall.

"This is my first ever duel, it took this far to put me in this situation. I feel so disappointed I couldn't live to my Top 2 expectations and win more challenges, but this is not the end of William Viera. I'm

staying and if it has to be the end of Andrew McKnight for that, so be it."

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"It feels like shit to land in the bottom two, especially against William. He has been, like... my Burrow dad, and I really feel he made me give out the best in me. Eliminating such a mustelid will be devastating... but necessary."

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

"Andrew, William, you ready?" Ludwig calls out. "GO!"

The entire group cheers as the two mustelids start making their way up, a task made tougher by the thicker walls and the effort of the previous round. It is a challenge of patience and grits, both competitors heavily grunting out as they work to carve out holes in the less yielding cardboard.

As in the previous round, Andrew breaks an early lead - the polecat making use of his youthful energies to gain a small edge over his rival. William is more methodic, making use of his elbows to exert more powerful blows and taking his time to avoid any setbacks.

"Go, Drew! You can do this!" Z yells, undeterred by his freshly dressed wound.

"Think William can pull it through, to be honest..." John tells to Arron's and Kenneth's direction.

"Yep," the long-haired badger nods along. "Andrew is rushing it yet again. He's gonna take a slip sooner or later."

The polecat has reached midway through the top, but his pace is clearly slowing as fatigue starts to set in. William is inching closer to him, keeping a solid, steady rhythm as he punches and kicks through the wall - his expression focused and undeterred by the younger mustelid's progress.

"I'm trying not to pay attention to what Andrew's doing and stay concentrated on my own task. My bet's that he's gonna rush it and tire himself to the point I can take a stab at him, and hopefully reach that bell before he can manage to."

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

Andrew and William are pulling almost side-to-side, the polecat daring to dart a look to his right as he sees the weasel hoisting himself to his level. With a loud grunt, he resumes his frenzied motions, summoning all the energies he got left in order to tackle the final length of the wall.

"Punching and kicking this wall has been taxing as all hell on my paws, no wonder why Z was bleeding all over the place. But I see nothing but that bell above me and I know I got more left in my tank than William. This is my time to shine and let the Alpha out."

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

The weasel's focused expression switches to full dread as he realizes Andrew is getting a second wind, the polecat starting to gain ground on him again as the bells draw nearer. He starts beating the wall with frantic abandon, his slow-but-steady strategy seemingly abandoned for good - but it doesn't take long before his motions grow weaker, lactic acid surging through his upper body muscles as the effort of the previous challenges finally takes its toll.

Andrew looks up in determination as he pulls further up, the 20-foot mark well below him by now. "Get up there! Smash that shit!" Z screams, struggling to contain his excitement as he sees his closest friend in the Burrow inch closer to safety with each motion.

With one last, decisive push, his body trembling and heaving with effort, Andrew reaches out with a paw and rings the bell - William being unable to do much other than look at the youngster with a defeated expression plastered on his face.

"ANDREW WINS THE DUEL!" Ludwig yells, the polecat letting out a huge roar - tears pooling in the corners of his eyes as he clings to the wall.

"YES!" Zakee jumps from the bench, startling Kenneth and Eddie. "Yes..." he snorts.

*"Holy shit, this is... " *smiles, struggling to come up with words* "This is freaking unreal. My butt was on the line, and I saved myself like a damn boss. I've proved over and over that I've nothing to fear from anyone left in the run, and this is the icing on the cake."*

~Andrew, 22, European Polecat, Roadie

*"Of course we've all grown to like the kid, he's one hell of a competitor and has never had a bad word for anyone in here." *the otter slightly frowns as Andrew hugs William* "But we need to remember this guy's name in the long run. I'm not losing, be it to the badgers or the young thing who found his wings."*

~Eddie, 32, Giant Otter, Demolition Foreman

"I'm so sorry..." Andrew says somewhat sheepishly at the weasel. "I took the freakin' house chef away from the entire Burrow, these guys are gonna hate me!" he jokes, trying to hide the underlying sadness. "You rock, Burrow dad..."

"Never expected you to step aside and give me an easy one," William manages to crack a smile as he hugs the roadie. "Keep showing these folks where it's at."

"Andrew, you survived this duel, you can go join your fellow competitors," Ludwig motions the polecat to reach the five on the bench, looking forlorn at the eliminated weasel. "William, unfortunately, your time on American Mustelid Alpha is up. You proved to everyone here that having kids doesn't stop any fur from kicking tail. You have reached this Burrow on the top of the pack and you leave it after one hell of a ride, be proud of it."

"You bet," William nods, shaking the host's paw. "You made this old man feel alive... and maimed him in the process," the weasel chuckles.

"All in all, I think this experience was totally worth it. It really pushed me to my limits and taught me things I wouldn't have learned otherwise. I can't wait to tell my family of all the stories that trespassed through here."

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

"Alright, William, it's time to head out," Ludwig says as the weasel walks down the whole row of mustelids, shaking paws and hugging everyone one last time. He bows to the whole group one last time before leaving the premises, a smile on his face as he walks away in the distance.

“Guys, we’re officially at the middle point of this competition. Six of you have left, six are still standing,” the host motions to the group, some of the players proudly nodding along. “At this point in the competition, being tough and fierce just doesn’t cut it anymore. If you want to keep working your way up the ladder, you need to command your presence in every challenge, every interaction, every aspect of your life, be it at the Burrow or... wherever we end up,” he says. “Go get some rest now, I’ll see you later...”

**William is shown as he walks into his bedroom, letting out a sigh as he starts collecting his possessions* “I’ve got absolutely no regrets about my time here. I could very well have stayed home, I literally decided to toss my name in the hat on the spur of the moment - yet I managed to survive long enough to put a lot of younger, tougher folks behind me. Seventh place isn’t much to look at on paper, but to me it’s proof that life at 34 has literally just begun.”*

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

William pushes his suitcase out of the room, before walking back and leaving a picture of himself with his family on top of his bedside table, as well as a Honduran flag lapel pin on Eddie’s pillow.

“If I am to call a winner from the six still in the running, my money’s on Eddie. No offense to the rest, but he’s easily the strongest, toughest and most accomplished mustelid in this group. If he tackles the solo sides as he did with the duels, then the others need a fight and a half to survive. I should know...”

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

The weasel walks down the stairs with his suitcase in tow, stepping out of the front door and closing it behind himself.

*“¡Y este cuento no se acaba, que los Viera mientras duran, duran!” *chuckles, letting out a faint laugh**

~William, 34, Least Weasel, Personal Trainer

Duel #6, “Hole In The Wall” – First Round

