

THE SUMMER MAIL-IN TOURNEY, GRAND TOURNAMENT LXX

"THE ONE WHERE WE WERE QUARANTINED"

Brundell, Attendant of the Bells, cleared his throat and, in a deep voice, intoned, "The Duke of the Isle of Rhode and Count of the Dellware." Immediately following this worthy declaration, the double doors opened to the sight of renowned Alastari manager, The Upright Man. Behind him, a series of henchmen who knew their business carried what appeared to be heavy boxes filled with paper. A weak cheer went up amongst the other managers. As had happened often enough to be considered a habit, TUM was late and last to the party. The febrile hum in the hall grew.

With a self-deprecating bob of his head and pained grin, The Upright Man headed over to the table where DMobster, The Muffin Man and a gaggle of groupies hovered. The lackeys followed, stepping, perhaps, a bit more lively at the sight of the groupies.

"You wouldn't believe it," TUM huffed. "Three barges, four carriages, a horse and a teleport. Rivers flowed backwards, wheels fell off carriages and they teleported me – Me! – to a place on the other side of the city, necessitating another carriage ride. Thankfully the wheels on this one remained intact!" TUM looked a little frazzled but, at the urging of The Muffin Man, took both his seat and a beverage. DMobster gave him a comforting slap on the back. TMM grinned at his old friend.

With all of the tourney managers finally seated there was a small period of revelry, marked as it typically was by oaths and challenges and, truth be told, epithets. Then, a tinkling sound, indicative of a silver spoon striking a crystal glass, brought the conversation in the hall to a stilting halt.

"Lords and Ladies of the Duel, welcome to both the Castle of Sheffield and the Estate of Martin Hall of Arms." Sandra of Castlemont stood tall and regal before those assembled. "Lord Brundell, the door, if you please." With that instruction, which left no room for misinterpretation, the good Lord pulled the double doors closed behind him, with an audible "snick". He placed his back to the doors and awaited the end of the kickoff celebration.

"In light of the sacrifice and commitment you managers bring to the tourney table, the Tourney Commission has decided to make this tournament a triple elimination tourney! Warriors will only be eliminated after receiving their third loss!"

A few gasps and grunts were heard from the assemblage but were quickly replaced by silence.

"As you might have expected, the prize will be two maximum damage potions, handed out by Lord Brundell himself from the vaunted Prize Room, to which only he has the key. Each potion will increase the damage rating of one warrior to the maximum possible in perpetuity!"

A cheer went up, which Lady Sandra talked over quickly. "Don't forget, a Stylemaster prize will also be awarded for the top ranked warrior of each style in Primus!" A more raucous cheer went up, perhaps because managers sensed the end of the formality was near.

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"Are you sure about this?" whispered Debbie Tonte. She looked dubiously at the stout wooden bar she straddled.

"I am," replied Olaf Modeen. "Think how much easier this tourney will be if we don't have to deal with the managers."

"But it's a Face to Face tournament!"

"They are face to face and, if I have my way of it, that's how they'll stay." Olaf made a show of stretching to and fro, dexter and sinister. Then, with a meaningful glance at Debbie, he squatted down with one hand on each side of the wooden beam. "Any minute now..."

They squatted in breathless silence excepting, if you will, the soft sound of their breathing. Within the manager's meeting, a dim voice could be discerned, rising in crescendo and then being joined by a chorus of other voices shouting in unison.

"Ready, steady.... Go!" Olaf and Debbie hoisted the wooden beam, the former almost dropping it and causing them both to stagger.

"By the Gods, Olaf," panted Debbie, struggling to retain both her grip and her calm. "Lift!!"

After no small period of agonizing doubt where Debbie held her position steady as Olaf wandered all over trying to keep his end afloat, a concerted effort on both their parts resulted in the beam sliding down heavily within the iron handles of the double doors with an audible “thunk”. There would be no exiting Martin Hall, at least any time soon.

Lord Brundell frowned and turned, glancing behind him at the sound of something banging heavily into the double doors. He listened carefully but the sound was not repeated. Idly fingering the key to the Prize Room residing in his trouser pocket, he ultimately turned his attention back to the Tournament kickoff.

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Roughly thirty-six hours later, a post-tournament changing of the guards resulted in two soldiers finally wandering by the double doors to Martin Hall, noticing the wooden bar, and removing it. When the doors creaked open, the scene slowly crept out of the hall and into the astonished guards’ eyes. There could be no other word to describe the scene inside than horrific.

Sandra of Castlemont sat in a corner behind a desk, eyes literally ablaze. In front of the desk was a pile of Ashe who, seemingly, had been reduced to cinders when Sandra had finally had enough of hearing the “when are we getting out of here?” question. Apparently looks could kill. No one else was anywhere near that particular desk.

The managers, grouped loosely by Alliance, had retreated to the furthest corners of the hall and peeked feral out from behind overturned tables, squinting into the light streaming through the open doors. There were conspicuously fewer groupies and henchman. In one corner, the Allied Axis managers had pitched tents and created a campfire of wasted paper. Deeders was calmly fishing in a stew pot, for what we make no conjecture.

Poor Lord Brundell, wrongly convicted by a managerial mob of locking everyone in, had been strung up by his feet from the candelabra as a form of street justice. Upside down, he senselessly swayed to-and-fro, the tips of his fingers dragging slowly across the floor.

One by one, the managers recovered their senses and made their collective silent way out the double doors and entered the passageway. Still largely shocked into silence, they turned right and shuffled in the general direction of the arenas to see how their warriors had fared in their absence. In an almost comic attempt at feigned normalcy, the last three managers at the doors, Physicker Feelgood, the Viscount of York and the Khan of Osman, each glanced at one another, gesturing for each other to exit first. With Lord Brundell still slowly swaying in the background, it made for an ironic scene of courtesy. None of them saw the silver object finally fall from his trouser pocket.

Physicker Feelgood had won the dulcet duel and was just exiting after the Viscount and Khan when the loud “ting” behind him made him quickly turn. He immediately spied the ornate key on the ground beneath Brundell and went to retrieve it. It was finely engraved and heavier than it looked. As he hefted the key absently in his hand, Feelgood stared off into space, recalling the events and words of the last day and a half. Slowly, ever so slowly, a wide grin began to form on his features.

“I’ll fix this wagon,” he growled, striding purposely out the door but, unlike his predecessors, making his way left towards the vaunted Prize Room.

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The managers encircled the open door to the Prize Room where Physicker Feelgood held court behind the half-door which served double duty as a counter. Behind him on shelves were enough glowing potions, weapons, shields and armor to make anyone salivate. Many of the managers were.

“We’re owed something for this debacle,” the good Physicker declared. “Suggestions?”

The debate raged for some time until someone practically reminded everyone that the key would eventually be missed. The thought of arrest by the guards or, even worse, Lady Sandra stomping down the passageway, was enough to drive agreement on a suitable and fair compensation.

“Very well, then! As agreed, we will expand the Stylemaster to all tournament classes. So, if your warrior was the top style of any tournament class, I will issue you a single skill potion. To keep some modicum of reason, you all agree to the following restrictions on use: In ADM, the potion must be used on an ADM warrior of the same style in any tourney-eligible ADM arena. In other words, you lunkheads, NOT someone in the city of Storm Rock. For warriors that qualify in the basic classes, the potion must be used on a living warrior from the same team, regardless of style. You may not sell them, only

trade them one for one. And no, you chumps who have Tourney Champions do not, repeat, do NOT get a potion for that. Agreed?!"

A chorus of responses ranging from "Yes!" to "Agreed!" to "Whatever.", this latter from those managers without a stylemaster, was heard from the assemblage.

"Ok, then. Step right up! OH, wait! YOU!" Feelgood pointed to one of the few remaining henchman, who immediately looked around with an anxious look. "Be a good lad and go let Lord Brundell down, would you? And please give him this key with our apologies. I'll lock up."

Across the land of Alastari the word is going out. The Duelmasters Grand Tournament LXX is coming soon! This tournament will be held on Saturday, July 20, and will be a Mail-in tournament only.

The Duelmasters Grand Tournament is a premier competition. Only the strong will survive; only the best will win! And for this tournament only, winning means an opportunity that ranks as every guild master's greatest dream: two potions, each of which will increase the damage rating of one warrior to the highest level possible, in perpetuity! All prizes must be used on a warrior Initiates class or higher, and may not exceed the natural damage limitations for a warrior. Please remember, you must use all prizes within six months of the tourney when they were won.

In this Grand Tournament, honors will be awarded to warriors in eleven categories of competition: five tournaments for Advanced Duelmasters (ADM) and six tournaments for regular Duelmasters (DM). Warriors will fight according to their ADM tournament classification and/or total number of fights as follows:

TOURNAMENT CLASSES

The Primus Tournament	-- All Primus inducted warriors (as of the June 2020 ADM Freeze)
The Contenders Tournament	-- All Primus contenders (as of the June 2020 ADM Freeze)
The Eligibles Tournament	-- All Primus qualified warriors (as of the June 2020 ADM Freeze)
The ADM Tournament	-- All other ADM warriors (as of the June 2020 ADM Freeze)
The Freshmen Tournament	-- All new ADM warriors and ADM Freshmen (as of the June 2020 ADM Freeze)
The Challengers Tournament	-- DM warriors with 31+ fights as of the Tournament
The Champions Tournament	-- DM warriors with 21+ fights as of the Tournament
The Adepts Tournament	-- DM warriors with 11-20 fights as of the Tournament
The Initiates Tournament	-- DM warriors with 5-10 fights as of the Tournament
The Apprentices Tournament	-- DM warriors with 1-4 fights as of the Tournament
The Rookies Tournament	-- DM warriors with 0 fights as of the Tournament (July 18, 2020)

All warriors who have graduated to ADM before the tournament (due dates on or before Thursday, July 16), as well as warriors who were classified as Freshmen as of the June 2020 freeze, will fight in the Freshman Tournament. All ADM warriors who are not Freshman or Primus qualified (Eligibles) or inducted (Contenders or Primus) will fight in the ADM tourney. A warrior's number of fights is calculated by adding his regular arena bouts and roughly half of his previous tournament fights. Please note that all games due on Thursday will process before the tournament, while games due on Friday and Saturday will run after. A warrior's number of fights is calculated by adding his regular arena bouts and roughly half of his previous tournament fights. A warrior's fight total is determined by his record and statistics as of the day of the tournament; the freeze date for ADM warriors was June 7 at 10:57pm.

There will be ten rounds of combat. Pairings in the tournaments are random. In all tournament classes except Primus and Contenders, your warrior's third loss will drop him from the tournament. In the Primus and Contenders Tourneys, warriors will not be eliminated until after Round 5; at that point and thereafter, warriors with three losses will be eliminated. Each tournament will continue until only one warrior remains uneliminated. On the average, each warrior will fight six fights, with a minimum of three fights for each warrior, barring death. Learning, experience, and the likelihood of dying are all at half of

their normal rates--only so much can be learned in such a short time, fighting with blunted weapons. The record and popularity of your warriors in the tournament does not count towards their record in regular arena play.

Those warriors who win eight or more fights in the regular tourney and are alive at the end of Round 10 will be declared Tournament Victors. Tournament Victors may write "Tournament Victor" next to one of their challenges each turn in regular arena play to receive increased priority on their challenge. The warrior with the best overall record at the end of each regular Grand Tournament will be declared Tournament Champion and will fight for free in regular arena play. Tournament Victor and Champion status are great honors which last until the next Grand Tournament or until six months have passed.

In addition, one bonus skill potion will be awarded to the manager of each of the Stylemasters. Primus bonus potions must be used on a Primus warrior of the same style; ADM bonus potions must be used on an ADM warrior of the same style; basic DM potions may be used on any living warrior on the same team. All Stylemaster prizes must be used within six months.

You may enter as many of your gladiators in the tourney as you wish. The cost is \$7.00 per warrior, which includes postage. Your account will be billed when we run the tournament. If your account does not have sufficient funds, we may not process your warriors. Strategy sheets for all warriors you want to participate in the tourney must arrive at RSI by Wednesday, July 15. We will not accept phoned-in strategy sheets for the tournament, though you may fax them.

Below is a strategy sheet request slip for the Summer Mail-in Tourney and, also included is a copy of a strategy sheet. To speed up the processing of your warriors, you may copy this strategy sheet, fill them in and send them back. If you'd rather have us mail you strategy sheets, fill out the request slip and note how many you need. There is also a tournament strategy sheet on the web site. Your warriors will be officially entered into the tourney when we receive your completed mail-in strategy sheets. The strategy sheet allows you to specify your gladiator's training for each fight up to the tenth round. You may also designate one alternate strategy against up to five different fighting styles.

Is your warrior the best in his class? How does your Adept measure up to the Adepts in other arenas? Do you have the strategy it takes to survive ten duels against foes from across the land of Alastari? Don't just ponder these questions! Register today for the Duellmasters Grand Tournament.

WHO:	You! And every other dedicated manager
WHAT:	Ten rounds of intense Duellmasters fights
WHEN:	July 18, 2020 (Strategy sheets due Wednesday, July 15)
WHERE:	At the RSI secret underground production facility
WHY:	If you've fought in a Grand Tourney before, you know why!

Mail-In Grand Tourney LXX Strategy Sheet Request Form

Please send as soon as possible to allow for mailing time.

Your Name: _____ Account #: _____ Send me _____ Mail-in strategy sheets!

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