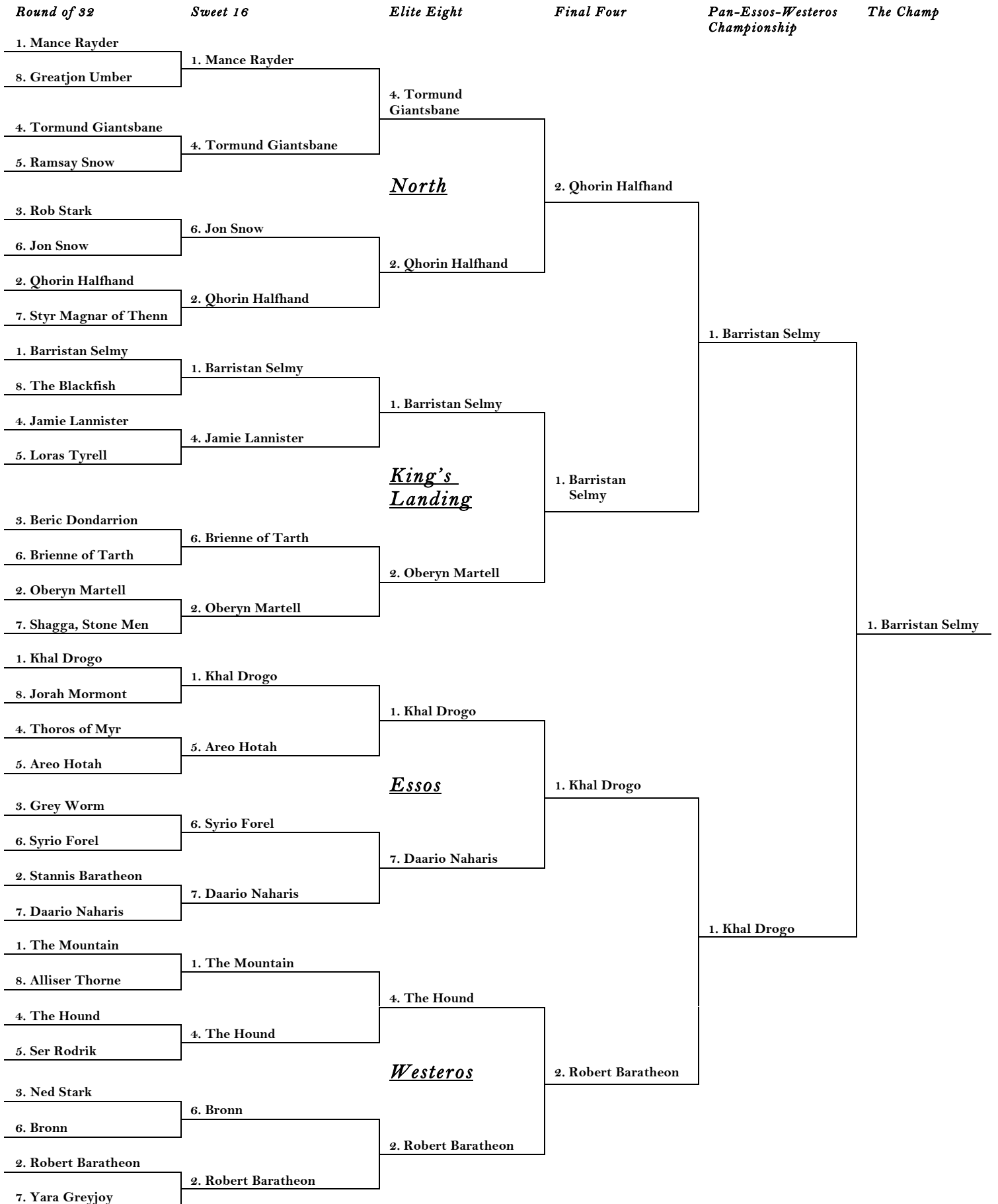


GAME OF THRONES COMBAT: MARCH MADNESS

Will Mirrer



Inspired by the ongoing NCAA tournament and upcoming Game of Thrones Season 6 premiere, this March Madness-style duel bracket determines the GOT universe's greatest fighters. Canon and television evidence are both considered. All evidence is fair game: duels, physical and skill attributes, weapon choice, reputation, style, battle outcomes, matchup effect – the totality of the circumstances. When show and book evidence was in *direct* conflict, it was thrown out and not considered. The initial 32 slots, and seeding, both loosely correlate with each fighter's combat *reputation*; regions are mostly related to where such character was born or spends his or her time. Eligible characters have to be both (i) alive when the GOT series *begins*, and (ii) appearing in *both the books and the show*. That excludes characters such as Victarion Greyjoy, Strong Belwas and Arthur Dayne. Dayne, especially, is an absolute legend, but limiting the population of characters to those alive and thus far appearing in both mediums enhances accessibility and the reliability of material we analyze. Each fighter is in his or her *prime*. All fights are in the Red Keep arena where the Red Viper fought the Mountain. GOT trial by combat rules apply: each duelist uses his or her weapon of choice (and no archers). Let the madness begin:

NORTH BRACKET:

The Round of 32:

1. Mance Rayder vs. 8. Greatjon Umber: Wildlings won't follow someone because their father was king – they follow only the strong. Mance Rayder had to best four wildling leaders in duels to become king beyond the wall, cementing his status as one of the finest fighters in a warrior culture. The Greatjon, as tall as Hodor and "twice as wide," is one of the strongest men alive. But despite his power, nobody considers Umber an elite warrior, while Mance is universally known as a top combatant. As we learned from Oberynd and the Mountain, strength alone rarely matches superior skill and quickness working in concert. **Mance Rayder moves on.**

4. Tormund Giantsbane vs. 5. Ramsay Snow: Tormund Giantsbane leads the wildlings once Mance is captured: in a culture that follows the strong, status as wildling leader is crucial evidence of combat prowess. The sadistic Ramsay of House Bolton had no proper arms training, and thus "swings that sword like a butcher hacking meat." C'mon now. **Tormund advances easily.**

3. Rob Stark vs. 6. Jon Snow: In his battles, Rob Stark "surround[ed] himself with . . . bodyguards," and he holds no notable single combat victories. When Jamie Lannister offers to duel Rob after Whispering Wood, Rob flat out admits Jamie would defeat him. Unlike his brother, Jon Snow's been constantly personally distinguishing himself in battle: from slaying Orell the warg, to defeating the cannibal chieftain Styr in single combat at Castle Black, and even besting a White Walker. **Jon Snow wins.**

2. Qhorin Halfhand vs. 7. Styr, Magnar of Thenn: As their leader, Styr is the wildling Thenn clan's top fighter. But Mance Rayder dueled and defeated Styr and his two-handed battle axe 3 times in the canon. In season 4, Jon Snow vanquished Styr at Castle Black. Qhorin Halfhand, though, is the most legendary ranger of the night's watch, "worth 20 common men" in battle. It begs belief that Styr, Jon Snow's inferior, would then proceed to defeat the greatest night's watch fighter alive (better than Jon). **The Halfhand wins.**

The Sweet 16:

1. Mance Rayder vs. 4. Tormund Giantsbane: Tormund is "immensely broad," with "massive arms," a "broad chest" and "bone crushing" grip. In the books, when Mance defeated 4 chieftains to become king, he avoided fighting the fifth and most formidable chieftain: Giantsbane. Tormund chose Mance as king instead of fighting for the title, explaining: "I can . . . outfight him . . . [b]ut Mance has cunning." Mance doesn't challenge this assessment. The show supports Tormund's opinion: while Mance commands from his tent at Castle Black, Tormund takes down seemingly half the Night's Watch himself. Prickly Ser Alliser Thorne, who had distinguished himself in battle during Robert's Rebellion, engages Tormund in a duel. Tormund tumbles away from Thorne's attack, pivoting on one knee and cutting Thorne's belly in a single mind-blowing motion, besting Thorne. Toss in his destruction of countless wights at Hardhome, and Tormund and his monstrous strength own a narrow edge here. **Tormund Giantsbane onto the Elite Eight.**

2. Qhorin Halfhand vs. 6. Jon Snow: Jon and Qhorin already fought as prisoners, with Qhorin allowing Jon to kill him in order for Jon to prove his loyalty to the wildlings. In the rematch, Jon himself makes this one easy for us, in explaining to Sam that: ". . . the Halfhand could have killed me as easy as you swat a bug." **The Halfhand moves on.**

The Elite Eight:

2. Qhorin Halfhand vs. 4. Tormund Giantsbane: Wildlings admit they knew "no more implacable foe" than the Halfhand. When the Halfhand fights Jon Snow, he's *letting* Jon win, yet Jon cannot believe the Halfhand's savage power and blinding speed. We can't ignore Tormund's Castle Black heroics, defeating Alliser Thorne and dozens of the Night's Watch; nor his heroics fighting off scores of wights at Hardhome. And yet, the wights are "clumsy things," and his Night's Watch opponents were mostly untrained – the fighters had already perished on Mormont's ranging mission. The Halfhand has the better duel resume, too, having defeated an elite

wildling chieftain, Alfyn Crowkiller. The legend Qhorin Halfhand even caught an incoming wildling axe with one hand, saving his life but losing three fingers in the process. And then somehow learned to fight better with his left hand than he ever could with his right – a martial feat even the great Jamie Lannister knows he will never hope to match. **The Halfhand wins the North, advancing to the Final Four.**

KING'S LANDING BRACKET:

The Round of 32:

1. Barristan Selmy vs 8. The Blackfish: The Blackfish, Cat's uncle, holds a prestigious position as knight of the Gate, and won renown in the Stepstones in the War of the Ninepenny Kings. Jamie Lannister deeply respects the Blackfish's swordsmanship. Yet Barristan Selmy and the Blackfish fought side by side in the Stepstones - and Selmy won the *far greater renown*: Selmy, not the Blackfish, cut a "bloody swath" through an entire sellsword company to reach the Blackfyre Rebellion's leader, Maelys the Monstrous. He then killed him in single combat, thus single-handedly ending the war and earning the adulation of the seven kingdoms. **Selmy advances.**

4. Jamie Lannister vs. 5. Loras Tyrell: When told that Loras Tyrell, a famous joust, bested Jamie, Oberyn educates us: "by defeated, you mean unhorsed, in tourney. Tell me who he's slain in battle if you mean to frighten me." A joust with rules is not a duel; a blunted lance is not a sharpened sword. Without his trusty tourney lance, Loras is regularly defeated - first the Mountain was about to finish him before the Hound intervened, then Brienne outmuscles Loras to win a melee. Jamie Lannister is respected far and wide in battle: Rob Stark shivers in fear at the prospect of facing Jamie in single combat, after Jamie cuts down ten knights by himself to get to Rob at Whispering Wood. Trustworthy expert Barristan Selmy called Jamie the best natural swordsman he saw in decades. With swords, the "bigger, stronger, faster" **Jamie will move to the Sweet 16.**

3. Beric Dondarrion vs. 6. Brienne of Tarth: Brienne is over 6 ½ feet tall and strong as a bull, building her resume by outmuscling Loras Tyrell to win the Melee of Bitterbridge. Both Beric Dondarrion and Brienne fought a weakened Hound: Brienne when the Hound had been "walking a lot slower" due to an infection, and Beric when the Hound was hungover and terrified of Beric's flaming sword due to pyrophobia. While the Hound's savage strength was too much for Beric, Brienne matched strength with strength and barely outlasted the Hound. Thus, the stronger, more skilled **Brienne will defeat Beric.**

2. Oberyn Martell vs. 7. Shagga, Stone Men: Shagga of the hill tribes is stylistically similar to the Mountain, relying on his strength, with "tree trunks for legs." The lightning quick Oberyn Martell will thus use the same strategy he used on the Mountain: dodging his ponderous lunges until he tires, and then countering with feints and blindingly speedy spear thrusts. Shagga also isn't as strong as the Mountain, and in the canon Tyrion considers Shagga less crucial than Bronn. Therefore, Oberyn will successfully dodge Shagga's two battle axes, and without a shield, Shagga will be hard-pressed to defend Oberyn's spear thrusts. **Oberyn Martell moves on.**

The Sweet 16:

1. Barristan Selmy vs. 4. Jamie Lannister: Jamie Lannister is a great knight, illustrated, for one, by cutting down 10 knights protecting Rob Stark at Whispering Wood. However, there is evidence that Jamie is *a bit* overrated: in the show he fights Ned Stark to only a draw prior to outside intervention; later Brienne defeats him, though Jamie was at a significant disadvantage with bound hands and weakened from imprisonment. Jamie was the youngest knight ever named to the Kingsguard - *yet his appointment was due to politics, not ability*. All know Barristan Selmy to be one of the best swordsmen of all time. Selmy would scoff at Jamie's imperfect dueling resume: Barristan has won more single combats *than any man alive*. While Jamie impressively fought through ten knights, remember it was Selmy cutting a "bloody swath" through an entire sellsword company to end a rebellion himself. Selmy has proven himself singularly dominant in battle far more often than Jamie. Jamie himself even admiringly deems Selmy to be "a painter who used only red." **Selmy to the Elite Eight.**

2. Oberyn Martell vs. 6. Brienne: Brienne is far stronger than Oberyn, and defeated the Hound and Jamie, two elite fighters. But both victories carry asterisks: the Hound was weakened by infection, and Jamie was weakened from imprisonment and had his hands bound. Though both perished, the Mountain was absolutely no match for the Red Viper's unreal quickness and agility. Brienne thrives in close-quartered hand-to-hand combat – form tacking Loras Tyrell in a melee; viciously punching the Hound off a cliff. Oberyn presents Brienne with a totally different kind of opponent: one who won't attempt to match Brienne's strength, instead maintaining a reach advantage with his eight foot spear, finding chinks in her armor. As medieval weapon experts have noted: "working in distance as opposed to . . . tight corners – it's very much about body size and agility. . ." Oberyn has fought in countless wars, even forming his own sellsword company, preparing himself for all manner of deadly opponents, whereas Brienne's preparation has come mostly in tourney, with blunted weapons. **Oberyn advances.**

The Elite Eight:

1. Barristan Selmy vs. 2. Oberyn Martell: Oberyn has elite speed, which he showed in toying with the Mountain. Barristan, known as the “greatest living knight,” has elite speed as well – but with unrivaled technical proficiency to boot. For example, Jamie witnessed Selmy destroy a worthy opponent with “the best move he ever saw” – a counter riposte. Essentially Selmy feinted a strike, knowing his opponent would parry it and counter attack, which Selmy then parried and countered himself – an insanely complicated move requiring tremendous speed and unparalleled technique and anticipation. Oberyn is known to duel; Barristan Selmy is known to have won more duels than any man alive. He’ll thus parry and counter the Red Viper’s spear thrusts with a technical precision that the Mountain sorely lacked. **Selmy wins Kings Landing, and is in the Final Four.**

ESSOS BRACKET:

The Round of 32:

1. Khal Drogo vs. 8. Jorah Mormont: Jorah Mormont has already fought Khal Drogo's bloodrider in single combat, a helpful comparison. Jorah survived, but was clearly outfought. The bloodrider Qotho was far faster, leaving Jorah unable to parry each whirling attack, before Jorah was luckily spared from death only by Qotho's arakh lodging stuck in Jorah's hip bone. And while Jorah couldn't keep up with Qotho, we know Khal Drogo would defeat Qotho: as Dothraki culture follows strength (like the wildlings a world away), Drogo's bloodriders - including Qotho - follow Drogo only because he is the top fighter of all Dothraki. Second, we witness Drogo eviscerating a comparable bloodrider, Mago, *while completely unarmed*. **Drogo advances.**

4. Thoros of Myr vs. 5. Areo Hotah: Thoros is famous, but without any combat accomplishments (save winning a melee), he's famous because he used a flaming sword, and because he's part of the Westerosi social fabric. No one knows Areo Hotah outside Dorne, so it's easy to underrate him - he doesn't compete in Westerosi tournaments, and Dorne remains neutral in wartime, limiting his battle resume. Yet Hotah is huge and powerful, wielding a mighty longaxe with a 6 foot shaft. He trained with the elite Norvoshi combat priests. The Sand Snakes are worthy fighters, and the canon implies that Hotah would wipe the floor with them in combat. Hotah's also the top personal guard for the Dornish prince, analogous to the top Kingsguard and strong evidence of his prowess. Hotah, stronger, faster, better trained, will win. **Hotah to the Sweet 16.**

3. Grey Worm vs. 6. Syrio Forel: Syrio Forel, Arya's dancing master, was first sword to the Sealord of Braavos – an employment evidencing martial ability. Grey Worm heads Daenerys' Unsullied – famous soldiers. But crucially, the Unsullied are “[s]oldiers, not warriors . . . [T]heir training teaches them to obey . . .” Their acclaim was primarily built on *obedience and organization* in battle – not dueling. Grey Worm fights well, and is the best of the Unsullied, but had some difficulty using his long spear in close quarters in Mereen. Syrio Forel's Braavosi training, on the other hand, is uniquely suited towards single combat, with fencing the closest modern analogy to the Braavosi style. With ridiculous speed and duel training, **Syrio advances.**

2. Stannis Baratheon vs. 7. Daario Naharis: Daario used his combat abilities to rise from slave in the Meereenese fighting pits (in the show) to commander of a sellsword company. Stannis Baratheon has battle fame – but as a *commander*, not a fighter. While we see him take out a couple common soldiers while invading King's Landing, in the books he commands from the rear, like Tywin Lannister, and is an undistinguished combatant. To stay alive after countless gladiator fights in Mereen, Daario necessarily has tremendous talent, and must therefore defeat the mediocre Stannis Baratheon. **Daario wins.**

The Sweet 16:

1. Khal Drogo vs. 5. Areo Hotah: Hotah is an elite fighter: top guard to the prince of Dorne, advanced training with Norvoshi priests, powerful, and took down a kingsguard knight (in the canon). To date we know little else of Areo, unfortunately. Dothraki cut off their braids upon defeat, yet Khal Drogo's braids *have never been cut* – he's never lost a battle, never lost a duel, never retreated, never surrendered. 40,000 fighters follow Drogo in his khalasar, because he is the finest fighter among them all. Hotah may be one of the few men who can match Drogo's strength, but there's no way he matches Drogo's speed – Drogo is so fast he defeated a bloodrider without even pulling a weapon – dodging attack after attack with contempt. The smart money is on Drogo, “one of the finest killers alive,” to use his speed to slip inside Hotah's mighty longaxe. **Drogo onto the Elite Eight.**

6. Syrio Forel vs. 7. Daario Naharis: Syrio Forel is *really* fast, evidenced by disabling all 5 Lannister guardsmen sent to take Arya hostage. With his light blade and speed, he'd love to face a big, strong, slow(er) opponent. Instead he faces Daario Naharis, who (in the show) explains that his tremendous speed is what kept him undefeated as a gladiator in the Meereenese fighting pits. In invading Mereen, Daario takes down more guards than Jorah or Grey Worm, and again outclasses both of them in protecting Danaerys from the Sons of the Harpy. This while Syrio – albeit an *unarmed* Syrio – more than likely died at the hands of Meryn freakin' Trant - no one's idea of a great warrior. Pull a Khal Drogo and dodge an attack and pick up a guardsmen's sword, or something. Just don't lose to Meryn Trant and expect to defeat Daario Naharis. **Daario wins.**

The Elite Eight:

1. Khal Drogo vs. 7. Daario Naharis: Daario will be Drogo's toughest match yet: Daario was far more integral than Jorah Mormont or Grey Worm in their Meerenese battles, and his rise from gladiator slave to sellsword company captain speaks volumes. Yet Khal Drogo wasn't born famous, either: he earned his reputation by becoming "one of the finest killers alive." Drogo has faced – and defeated – the toughest competition out there: rival khals. He's defeated bloodriders unarmed, and has slain multiple khals in a single day. Crucially, Drogo is facing *the same combat style* he's prepared for his entire life: Daario wields a Dothraki arakh, a curved short sword. Thus, Drogo's dominance of fellow khals should translate to an arakh duel with Daario. What elite warrior has Daario slain? The evidence points to a **Drogo victory; Drogo enters the Final Four.**

WESTEROS BRACKET:

The Round of 32:

1. The Mountain vs. Ser Alliser Thorne: Gregor "the Mountain" Clegane is *the* biggest, strongest man alive – well over 7 feet tall with "strength like nothing human." Ser Alliser Thorne, who fought bravely in Robert's Rebellion and is master of arms at Castle Black, has a huge strength disadvantage. Unlike Oberynd Martell, he can't make up the difference with a big speed edge. As Bronn explains in declining to fight the Mountain, against someone that strong, one mistake – *one misstep* - is certain death. Yet we've seen that Thorne is error-prone: dueling Tormund Giantsbane at the Wall, Thorne shows off nifty footwork, but then recklessly attacks, a terrible mistake: Tormund counters with Thorne now off-balance and exposed, finishing him. Thorne illustrates an inability to fight mistake-free, which is what it takes to beat the Mountain. **The Mountain wins.**

4. The Hound vs. 5. Ser Rodrik Cassel: Sandor "the Hound" Clegane is the second strongest man alive (at least when Robert Baratheon was fat). Known everywhere as an elite combatant, he's shown technical skill winning tournaments (including King's Landing), and has duel victories, defeating a stalwart knight, Beric Dondarrion, for example. Ser Rodrik, the Starks' master of arms and a rare Northern knight, is far weaker. And when beset upon by Hill Tribes near the Vale, Rodrik slays one or two poorly equipped fighters, and is wounded. Bronn, though, cuts through *ten* of them "like a whirlwind": Catelyn knows without Bronn, she would have died. This scene makes it clear Rodrik is *several combat tiers* below Bronn. **The Hound will move on.**

3. Ned Stark vs. 6. Bronn: Ned Stark *seems* like a badass fighter. He wields a Valyrian steel greatsword. In the show, he briefly fights Jamie Lannister to a draw. He killed the legendary Arthur Dayne. But dig deeper: killing Dayne took a *7 on 3* numbers edge, and Dayne *still* would have killed Ned but for Howland Reed intervening. Jamie believes he'd have finished Ned if his man didn't meddle. It takes skill to stay alive as a sellsword, constantly fighting for one's life – it takes tremendous skill to rise from sellsword to landed knight, as Bronn did. Bronn defeats *ten* tribesmen in combat near the Vale, then duels the Vale's best knight - a useful analogy. He lets Vardis Egen, who's in heavy armor, attack and attack, tiring himself. Then the unarmored Bronn counters with brutal efficiency, connecting on every swing, dropping Egen. Bronn earned his reputation; Ned's famous because he's a Stark, and because he's linked to his more talented friend, Robert Baratheon. Once Ned exhausts himself, **Bronn will win.**

2. Robert Baratheon vs. 7. Yara Greyjoy: Yara Greyjoy, Theon's sister, is an able warrior – she has to be to lead the Iron Islanders, another culture that follows strength, into battle with 30 ships. At Deepwood Motte, she defeats several of Stannis' troops in the canon before falling to a big axeman while fatigued. Yet Robert Baratheon must have thrice the strength of the axeman who defeated Yara Greyjoy. In his prime, much like the Mountain a generation later, Robert had a "giant's strength." In combat, he maximized his strength advantage by forgoing a sword and instead wielding a ridiculously heavy warhammer that Ned Stark "*could scarcely lift.*" Universally renowned as a "great warrior" and with absurd power, **Robert moves on.**

The Sweet 16:

1. The Mountain vs. 4. The Hound: The Mountain is the strongest man alive. So Oberynd danced around Gregor until he was exhausted from attacking in armor so heavy no other man could walk in, let alone don in combat. The only plausible strategy for a much smaller opponent, yet *incredibly risky*: as Bronn foretells the Red Viper's fate – "one misstep, and I'm dead." But the Hound will employ tactics few others could dream of, as the one man alive strong enough to meet Gregor's "freakish strength" head on – which he does at the King's Landing tourney. Rather than dodge his brother's killing swing, the Hound, the second strongest man alive, *blocks and even turns* the Mountain's giant sword with his own two-handed broadsword. For "what seemed an eternity" they hammer at each other, and it's a draw (in the canon and the show) as Robert Baratheon brings the fight to a premature end. But GRRM pointedly notes in the canon that the Mountain thrice swung at the Hound's helmed face, while the Hound *never once* swung at the Mountain's vulnerable, unprotected face. So a draw for the Hound, but while *at a combat disadvantage*. The Mountain's lack of endurance is well-documented, and Bronn notes that while the Mountain is faster than he should be at that size, speed is far from his forte. The Hound appears to have tremendous stamina, and Jamie notes the Hound is extremely fast for his size. We've seen the

Hound has the power to withstand the Mountain's initial attack. And when he tires – which we know he will - the Hound will likely use his clearly superior technique, speed, and endurance to finally exact revenge on big brother. **The Hound is victorious.**

2. Robert Baratheon vs. 6. Bronn: With Robert's giant strength and monstrously heavy warhammer, Bronn uses the strategy he outlined should he fight the Mountain. Dodge and dodge, win the stamina battle then use his speed edge to slip inside the warhammer's long reach. One problem: Robert doesn't suffer from the Mountain's endurance problems. Robert is famous for winning three battles in a single day, personally leading all three attacks. He defeated the renowned warrior Rhaegar Targaryen after *a full hour* of single combat. Bronn's unproven Mountain plan thus won't translate against Robert, who is essentially a more skilled, more athletic, untiring Mountain. Bronn also lacks Baratheon's impressive duel victories. **Robert into the Sweet 16.**

The Elite Eight:

2. Robert Baratheon vs. 4. The Hound: In size/strength, a tossup, but Robert has legendary endurance. Albeit (i) only in the show and (ii) while infected, the Hound duels Brienne and loses, docking him *slightly*. Barristan Selmy trustily deemed Robert "a great warrior." He crushed Rhaegar's breastplate with his warhammer on the Trident, *personally winning the war in single combat* - against a top-flight warrior. His battlefield accomplishments far lap the Hound's: defeating 3 armies in a single day by besting several noted lords in duels, and personally turning the tide of a rebellion he would win by virtue of his own combat heroics. Warhammers, with their fine point, are designed to pierce heavy armor far more effectively than swords. With his immensely heavy hammer, Robert can thus crush even the Hound's giant armor, as he did to Rhaegar's: **Robert to the Final Four.**

FINAL FOUR:

1. Barristan Selmy vs. 2. Qhorin Halfhand: Thin margins in the final four, top-notch fighters a world away with no common opponents. It is known Selmy never fails to exploit an opponent's weakness. The Halfhand's is his inability to wield a shield with his maimed hand. Recall Jamie gushing over Selmy's counter riposte artistry: the Halfhand lacks a shield to defend such counters. Selmy has won far more duels than the Halfhand. Selmy *ended two* rebellions: defeating Simon Toyne and Maelys the Monstrous. Barristan outfought scores of troops to get to Maelys, while the Halfhand was fatefully taken prisoner *when outnumbered by far fewer wildling troops*. Selmy does not seem to slow in armor - with undiminished speed in plate, while the Halfhand wears no armor at all, will also provide Selmy with a fateful edge. All are convinced Selmy is one of the greatest knights of all time: **Selmy to the final.**

1. Khal Drogo vs. 2. Robert Baratheon: Robert's weapon, the warhammer, is tremendously heavy with a fine point, leveraging Robert's power in piercing armor more effectively than swords. *Yet its advantage is nonexistent against Khal Drogo*, who like all Dothraki foregoes the protections of armor for enhanced speed without it. Robert is thus handicapped by a much heavier weapon limiting his speed, without its usual advantage against armored knights. Drogo is also blindingly quick, faster than Robert by reputation. As impressive it was that Robert won a rebellion with his warhammer, his duel accomplishments were mostly against *lords by birth*; Drogo defeats several rival khals in a single day. Khals earn their "lordship" by fighting ability, not birth. Thus, Drogo generally has the more impressive combat victories by way of Dothraki culture elevating only the best warriors to khal. Drogo's more technically skilled, evidenced by Robert's "indifferent" tourney resume. Drogo executed the most impressive combat moves in the entire series: dodging his bloodrider's arakh with ridiculous bobbing and weaving, defeating a talented warrior while unarmed. Drogo can therefore likewise dodge the much heavier warhammer. While Drogo is universally the most feared warrior in Essos, Robert, for all his greatness, lags behind both Selmy (and Dayne) in Westerosi lore. Likely, **Drogo moves on to the final.**

PAN-ESSOS-WESTEROS CHAMPIONSHIP:

1. Barristan Selmy vs. 1. Khal Drogo: Selmy wears full armor; Drogo wears none. Armor is a double-edged sword, making you safer but slower. But the canon notes Selmy does not seem to slow in armor. Thus, Drogo won't have the significant speed edge one might expect, and is more exposed to harm. Pivotal, in the canon an armored Selmy duels an elite Meerenese pit fighter, and analogously to Drogo he is *unarmored and wielding a Dothraki arakh*. Selmy knew that "here at close quarters, the arakh's length would tell against it." Despite Khrazz' speed rivaling Drogo's ("blazing fast, as quick as any man Ser Barristan had ever fought"), *it's not even close* as Selmy parries and lets his armor do its job, then counters in a lopsided fight. And this is *old man* Selmy dominating – while way past his prime. Since Drogo has the largest khalasar of all Dothraki, his forces fight with an advantage in battle, possessing the larger force. Selmy succeeds despite being enormously *outnumbered*, first against Maelys the Monstrous' forces. Later, with his king imprisoned at Duskendale, Tywin Lannister wanted to storm the walls, yet the king would be killed before Tywin's forces could reach him. So Selmy was given one night to save the king by himself. He climbed the walls of Duskendale with stealth. He took out several sentries, then fought his way through the dungeons – *all alone* – slaying knight after knight, guard after guard. The alarm now raised, Selmy takes an arrow, yet keeps on dominating more soldiers, and he and the king escape Duskendale alive. Just one of many heroic military acts Selmy has completed against truly overwhelming odds. **The Champ: Ser Barristan Selmy.**