

# THE DIRTSHEET

Having been produced independently since 2044, the Dirtsheet is your bi-monthly source for the latest in Urban Manhunt news. We pride ourselves on publishing the truth rather than what the NUML and the corporations want you to know. What they feed the public isn't always fact-based. This is where you go if you want the real scoop! No fancy graphics, no big budget gloss. This is a raw and unfiltered fanzine.

## NUML Shakeups

The NUML has been attempting to downplay this, but thanks to some leaked footage from an unknown source last week, the truth is getting out there. Over the past few months, the NUML has been making some major changes to their organizational structure, which includes letting some formerly high-ranking employees go. Of the thirteen ousted, eight of them have had unexpected (and quite fatal) accidents. The authorities have investigated the deaths, but the leaked footage shows NUML bigshot Marvis Bettincourt having a phone conversation with someone from the United States government about "making the issues go away and stay away."

What do these shakeups mean? How accidental were these "accidents"? And to what ends do the deaths serve? But the biggest question is: how deep do the governmental ties go? Hopefully, more info will come to light soon. We will definitely have our people digging deep to bring the truth to your doorstep.

## 2049 Season Mid-Season Report

As we reach the midway point of the 2049 season, we're starting to gain some insights about how things are shaping up as the hunters scramble to be at the top of the hill when it comes time for the hunt-offs. Let's look at some highlights.

### Future Projections

In the sport of Urban Manhunt, nothing is ever certain. However, by mid-season, one can certainly start to make some educated predictions as to who is going to make it to the hunt-offs... and who isn't.

Let's start by looking at the top ten ranked hunters in the league, as of July of 2049.

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| 1. The Grinning Reaper (14-0; 1,288 pts) | 6. Freon (12-3; 1,234 pts)           |
| 2. Castle Cane (14-1; 1,260 pts)         | 7. Magnum Steel (12-3; 1,229 pts)    |
| 3. Crazy Joe Hacker (14-2; 1,251 pts)    | 8. Vaudekill (12-3; 1,212 pts)       |
| 4. Caution (13-2; 1,248 pts)             | 9. Hotshot Ramirez (11-4; 1,207 pts) |
| 5. Lolly Pop (13-2; 1,246 pts)           | 10. Gridiron (11-4; 1,201 pts)       |

Those are the hard, cold numbers. But remember, we're just now halfway through the season and a lot can change between now and hunt-off time. Judging by past statistics, one half of the hunters listed in the Top 10 at the midseason point end up in the hunt-offs. That's on average, mind you, but that's how it often works out. There have been seasons that shatter those statistics, such as 2038, in which only one of the midseason Top 10'ers made it to the hunt-offs.

I don't foresee a scenario in which the Grinning Reaper and Castle Cane aren't in the hunt-offs. I'll eat my shoe if I'm wrong! Those two have performed at peak performance in every single match this season. Even though Cane took a loss to Desperado in late February, his score was 75, so even that loss wasn't enough to halt his momentum.

I would also place money on Caution, Lolly Pop and Freon making it to the Final Eight. Their performances have been brilliant this season and I can't imagine any of them taking a dip during the second leg of the journey.

Astute readers may notice that I left Crazy Joe Hacker out of my predictions, despite the fact that he's currently nestled in at the Number 3 spot. This omission was no accident. Hacker was keeping pace with the Grinning Reaper for the longest stretch, with neither of them taking a loss. Then, during a close match against Venus Vixen, a crim with a spiked club nailed him in the knee. It hit hard and the spikes penetrated so deep that he had to pull the weapon out. Even though he finished the match and narrowly defeated Vixen, it was clear to everyone that something was wrong. During a press conference a few days later, Joe stated that he was at 100 percent and wouldn't miss any matches. He was right about not missing any matches, but dead wrong about being at 100 percent. His performance has suffered ever since and lost two matches in the last month or so. He needs time to heal and rest, but the thirst for the hunt-offs is real. As far as I can tell, he will carry on, but will falter to the point of being squeezed out of the hunt-offs. Such an unfortunate situation.

So, who do I think will climb onto the Top 10 list and secure a spot in the Final Eight?

I could see any one of about twelve hunters stepping up in the months to come. Rather than going through all of them, I'll single out two that I believe will end up in the hunt-offs.

The first is Fastlane. Seamlessly transitioning from Auto Combat to Urban Manhunt, Veronica Barnes has proven that she has the right stuff to make a big splash in this sport. Given that she has blown so many experienced hunters out of the water so far and is only two spots away from the Top 10 anyway, I predict that she's going to skyrocket to the head of the pack sooner rather than later. Some have complained about the use of her "pit crew", but none of what she has done breaks any of the NUML bylaws.

Lastly, I choose Chang Mu. After a rough start in his career, this sword master is looking better and better out there since he signed on with WorldTekk in 2047. They are known for their top-notch training facilities, so perhaps their coaches have been working with him. Whatever the case may be, he's currently clocking in at Number 16 and could realistically pull himself up to the Final Eight.

## **Match of the Year Candidates**

In a season with a record-breaking number of neck-and-neck matches, it takes something truly spectacular to rise to the top of the field. Two of them immediately come to mind as ones that could very well earn the Match of the Year honors upon the season's end.

### **Blue Beret vs. Sly Fox (2/20/49)**

Anticipation for this match was already high, due to video footage of the two amidst a heated altercation at the exclusive Backzone Club emerged. The setup was perfect. Almost too perfect, as many fans insinuated that the entire incident was manufactured in order to build excitement for their scheduled match.

This was one of those rare instances in which the payoff actually exceeded the hype! Both hunters gave it their all in a back-and-forth affair that kept fans on the edge of their collective seats the entire time. At the 28-minute mark, the score was tied as 74-74. With two minutes remaining, both hunters raced to score those final points that would take them to the pay window. Roughly a minute and a half later, they each landed another elimination. Blue Beret led the match at 84 points, while Fox was at 80 points. With no crims in sight of either one, the match looked to be over.

Suddenly, the distinctive sound of a pod restock chimed and the light on Pod 2 lit up, piercing the darkness. That pod rested a mere twenty feet away from Fox. He raced toward it, opening it as the clock showed three seconds remaining. He was granted 6 points, thus winning him the match with a final score of 86 to 84.

The two hunters are scheduled to pair off again shortly before the hunt-offs, so we'll see if Blue Beret can exact revenge upon Fox for what many folks called a "fluke win".

### **Madison DeNucci vs. Punkster (5/8/49)**

No one expected much out of this match, to be quite honest. DeNucci hasn't exactly set the world on fire since debuting with the NUML in February, winning less than half her matches. Punkster was in a similar boat. 2049 had been her worst season of her entire career and her luster seemed to be wearing off with Urban Manhunt fans. Attendance for this match was abysmal, as was holo-vision viewership. In short, nobody cared about seeing these two hunters go at it.

At the 2:30 mark, Punkster took a nasty blow from a crim, who continued to beat her down until she was unable to remain conscious. The medics stepped in to pull her off the field and patch her up. Meanwhile, DeNucci continued earning points, reminding the fans why she was one of the hottest prospects going into the 2049 season. She was on fire, racking up 42 points well before the halfway point.

Already humiliated and angry, Punkster raged back into the zone and caught a break. Three very efficient crims were clustered together near her arrival point. Seeing an opportunity to redeem herself and play catch-up, she lit right into them, slicing them to ribbons with her sword while flawlessly avoiding their offense. The fans loved her gory eliminations, awarding her a lot of bonus points. When the last crim hit the ground, she had accumulated 33 points, effectively putting her back in the match.

From there, DeNucci stayed one step ahead of her until the final five minutes of the bout. Punkster finally pulled into the lead and the two switched places back and forth for the rest of the match. When the buzzer sounded, Punkster stood victorious with 92 points to DeNucci's 89 points. This was the match both hunters needed in order to jumpstart their careers, as they went on to win more matches than they lost.