After four weeks of action Round One of the *Cage Match Goalie Tournament* is finally over. Chalk prevailed in virtually every matchup but perhaps that was necessary to clear the board of the riff-raff. Round Two promises to bring some really tight matchups that will have us bickering and debating all week. We will also be adding a new feature that is sure to put a smile on your face so please stick with us to the end. Now let's see how the opening round closed out with the results from the *Dr yden Bracket.*

#1 Mike Smith over #8 Michal Neuvirth – 48 votes to 3 votes.

What a difference a year makes. A year ago at this time Neuvirth was a candidate to battle with Tomas Vokoun for the reigns in Washington while Smith was the de facto starter in Phoenix but coming off the season from hell he had in 2010-11 with Tampa Bay no one wanted to touch him. It turns out that Dave Tippett, Sean Burke and the Phoenix Coyotes have mastered some weird form of goalie witchcraft and extracted an absolute stud out of the mangled carcass that was Smith. Meanwhile, Neuvirth is still caught up in a goalie battle only this time with Braden Holtby. Neuvirth's inability to take the starting job by the haunches and Smith's complete turnaround have combined to flip this one on its head. Smith moves on easily.

#2 Cam Ward over #7 James Reimer – 48 votes to 0 votes.

That's right ladies and gentlemen, we have our first shutout* in Cage Match Tournament history!

Why is there an asterisk beside shutout you may ask? Well because we only got 48 votes. I don't know if it's general ennui from the lockout or simply poor timing with Canadian Thanksgiving and American Columbus Day but voting took a steep drop this week. This tournament was averaging well over 80 votes per poll for the first three weeks and then dove to like 50 this week. Props to Cam Ward for hitting the record books with this blanking of Reimer but the reality is it comes up a bit empty with the drop off in participation.

#3 Roberto Luongo over #6 Anders Lindback – 38 votes to 10 votes.

I can't decide if this is a vote of confidence in the possibility of Luongo getting traded or a complete lack of confidence in Lindback as a starter. The reality is the masses have voted for the Canucks backup ahead of the Lightning starter. I'm on board with this decision just realize there is a lot of uncertainty on either side.

#4 Niklas Backstrom over #5 Semyon Varlamov – 28 votes to 22 votes.

I've taken to criticizing the masses over the past few weeks for what I consider questionable votes but it's hard to disagree with a vote so close. It's true that I voted against the majority but I think that you may just be splitting hairs here.

In general, I don't think anyone truly believes in either Niklas Backstrom or Semyon Varlamov but they might believe in the potential of their respective teams. The Minnesota Wild have received all the accolades this summer. They made all the big signings and they also have the exciting rookie (Mikael Granlund) coming over to play this year. Oh and they have an incredibly deep farm system. They are the breakout team du jour.

Personally, I think that the Wild are one or two years away from making that leap. When all is said and done they may have the next dynasty in the Northwest Division but I actually think Colorado is much closer to being a playoff team.

If you recall, Colorado is a team that already had their big break two seasons ago but then fell back to the pack with back-to-back 11th place finishes as their young players suffered through growing pains. Nevertheless this is a deep young team with a lot of size and grit on the blueline and enough skill to roll three scoring lines up front. They may still struggle to make the playoffs but they will be in the hunt, which is as much as you can say for Minnesota.

Ultimately if both goaltenders are equally underwhelming and both teams are equally intriguing then you've got to do a gut check or a coin-flip. It's hard to criticize the results of a mental coin flip. My gut says Varlamov but it's too close to be definitive.

Roy Bracket
1. Rask
8. S. Mason
Rask
4. Hiller
5. Brodeur
Hiller
3. Bryzgalov
6. Holtby
Bryzgalov
2. Price
7. Dubnyk
Price
Hasek Bracket
1. Fleury
8. Khudobin
Fleury
4. Kiprusoff
5. Pavelec
Kiprusoff
3. Lehtonen
6. Crawford
Lehtonen
2. Schneider
7. Nabokov
Schneider
Sawchuk Bracket
1. Miller
8. Bobrovsky
Miller
4. Niemi
5. Anderson
Anderson
3. Howard
6. Elliott
Howard
2. Halak
7. Theodore
Halak
Dryden Bracket
1. Smith
8. Neuvirth
Smith
4. Backstrom
5. Varlamov
Backstrom
3. Luongo
6. Lindback
Luongo
2. Ward
7. Reimer
Ward
4th Best Fantasy Goalie

CAGE MATCH TOURNAMENT
LOSERS BRACKET
Toskala Island
Cheveldae Island
Cloutier Island
Salo Island
Steve Mason
Anton Khudobin
Sergei Bobrovsky
James Reimer