



Beer Menu Madness Pairing Commentary - 2009

NOTE: The ★ indicates a “BeerAppreciation featured pairing”

North American Region

1 Blue Moon vs 16 Linenkugel's Sunset Wheat – Coors’ popular Hoegaarden knockoff “the Moon” vs Miller’s own popular sweet American style wheat beer “Linie”. A match up of Blue Moon - a Belgian-ish lightly spicy wheat beer vs. the USA’s own turn on the style in Sunset Wheat, an interesting opening match of relative lightweight beers. Those that like the refreshing traditional style of wheat beer will vote for the Moon at #1.

8 Wild Blue Blueberry vs 9 Black Dog Honey Raspberry – Bud has created a very sweet fruity beer that packs a lot of aroma and blueberry-like flavor in “Wild Blue”. It is matched up with the old favorite Black Dog from Spanish Peaks. People who enjoy a sweeter but still beer-flavored brew will go to the dogs, I predict a slight upset for Honey Raspberry, a popular local brew.

5 Smutty Nose IPA vs 12 Lagunitas IPA – In an early battle of superior IPA’s, it will be a bitter struggle indeed. Smutty Nose from Maine has a real challenge on its hands with the upstart and always crazy Lagunitas crew from California. Traditionalists will stay with Smutty, but I for one find the citrusy, piny hop head delight from Lagunitas an upset winner. Warning: It’s easy to get addicted to Lagunitas.

4 Sierra Nevada Pale Ale vs 13 Green Flash IPA – Green Flash from the San Diego area has been pleasantly surprising beer enthusiasts for the past four years since it’s introduction. Its “left coast” hoppy offering is a fitting foe for the venerable Sierra. While Green does show its flash, it can’t beat the mellow balance of the favorite #4 seed in this one.

6 Magic Hat #9 vs 11 Woodchuck Cider – Magic Hat from Vermont’s popular slightly fruity ale vs the “all fruit” non-beer in this category. Woodchuck has a lot of followers, and may pull an upset here, but any real beer fan will pull a rabbit out of the Hat supporting their balanced brew in old #9.

3 Bell's Two Hearted Ale vs 14 Killian's Irish Red – Bell’s from the great Midwest (Kalamazoo) has a really strong contender here in the #3 slot of the North American Region. Killian’s by Coors is a mild and very lightly flavored lager with an Irish name. People who like a lot of flavor and some richness in their beer will put their heart into the #3 selection without getting their Irish up.

7 Thirsty Dog Porter vs 10 Anchor Porter – Bring on the darker stuff, lots of roasty, toasty and savory flavors. Neither the Dog nor the Anchor is particularly heavy, but both deliver a comforting tasty old style brew. Anchor from San Francisco is a classic who helped revive this old style in the US, but Thirsty Dog is the best of breed here.

2 La Fin Du Monde vs 15 Red Stripe Lager – In a very strange first round tilt, Fin Du Monde – a fine, very strong Belgian Triple style Canadian ale is matched against the very mild and somewhat watery Lager from the Islands. Fans of either brew will



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find the other not to their taste, and I would be surprised if the Stripe can match the passion that Fin Du Monde can stir in our local real beer fans.

Local Region

1 Yeungling Lager vs 16 Victory Lager – A wonderful pairing of two great throw back lagers – literally “your father’s lager” as it used to be. The number one seed from Pottsville clearly is the popular choice here, but if you throw back a couple of Victory’s from Downingtown you might just help create an unlikely first round upset.

8 Dogfish 90 Min IPA vs 9 Victory Golden Monkey – An exciting battle of two of the local heavyweights – either of which can win the whole region. Delaware’s Dogfish 90 was voted “best beer in the US” last year in a popular beer magazine, while the Golden Monkey has knocked out quite a few contenders over the years with its very popular strong Belgian Style triple. It’s a shame either have to lose in the first round, both are very worthy. I look for the Monkey to swing an upset here, though 90 IPA is a hop appreciators’ delight.

5 Dogfish India Brown Ale vs 12 Yards Thomas Jefferson Ale – Another Dogfish classic vs. a very interesting, strong ale from Philly’s Yards Brewery. Jefferson is based on an actual colonial recipe giving it spice, alcoholic punch but still comforting balance. The more mellow India Brown is yet another example of Sam from Dogfish’s inventive beer mind. Now is the time to show support for your President!

4 Lancaster Milk Stout vs 13 Victory Old Horizontal – Horizontal from Downingtown is one of the more popular “barley wine” styles available locally. Packing a lot of sweet, numbing strength, it dominates the more creamy toasty stout from Lancaster Brewing. Milk stout is a surprisingly light bodied darker ale. Those that like the fortitude of the Barley wine will pull for a Victory, but the favorite seed here is more palatable for the more casual beer enthusiast.

6 Stoudt’s Scarlet Lady vs 11 Lancaster Strawberry Wheat – The color red dominates this contest between the Scarlet Lady from Adamstown and the light fruit ale from the Amish country. Stout’s Lady has been a local favorite for years with its delicate caramel flavor with a light bite of hops, while Strawberry wheat is one of the best examples of a well crafted fruit beer you can find around. The Lady will justify her 6th seed and take this one to the next round.

3 Victory Storm King vs 14 Erie Cease and Desist – Eastern Pa meets western Pa in this battle between a dark roasty stout from Downingtown and Erie Brewing’s rich Scottish style ale. Those that crave a warm sweetness in their darker brews will choose the Cease and Desist, while the classic dry stout style begs for a victory. In a toss up, another Victory for Eastern Pa, but a close call for the favorite.

7 Victory Prima Pils vs 10 Flying Fish Abbey Dubbel – Another fascinating pairing of two local favorites, again a shame one has to be knocked out of the contest so early. Flying Fish of Cherry Hill has brought the great Belgian double style to the local beer drinker successfully and with real style and quality. Prima Pils, however, is the “gold standard” of which all American Pilsners are now measured. Sadly for Flying Fish,



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Prima Pils is a real contender to take this bracket with its excellent, brisk and fresh Pils. Great with sharp cheese or pizza!

2 Dogfish 60 Min IPA vs 15 Weyerbacher Double Simcoe IPA – Hop heads will be torn trying to choose between the IPA that started it all from Dogfish vs. Easton's upstart Double Simcoe. The Simcoe hop style is a floral almost sweet citrusy flavor that hop aficionados can't resist. Dogfish offers their less extreme but still bitter 60 min as a legitimate #2 seed. Unless there's a huge influx of hop addicts, I doubt an upset here and 60 Min will be the beer of the hour.

Northern European Region

1 Heineken vs 16 Paulaner Premium Pils – The Dutch euro-lager that started the whole imported lager craze decades ago meets a German classic style pilsner lager. It seems unlikely that Paulaner can unseat the Green Bottle for supremacy, but I would suggest all beer appreciators at least try the Paulaner and enjoy its light but flavorful classic taste.

8 Weihenstephan Hefe-Weiss vs 9 Paulaner Hefe-Weiss – A meeting between two of the oldest breweries in Germany if not the world. Hefe ("with yeast") Weiss ("wheat") is an interesting style of light bodied, but cloudy beer. It's hard to choose between either in this battle of the Hefe's, as they are both classics – maybe more bar patrons can pronounce Paulaner? (I know for me Weihenstephan is a mouthful!) Try either and enjoy a unique but yet not particularly challenging beer experience.

5 Amstel Light vs 12 Fullers London Pride – The bracket makers pulled a fast one here, pitting Heineken's popular light lager vs. a British full bodied London Pride Ale. Those who like a good, flavorful ale will flock to London, while beer drinkers looking for a very light beer with just a little bit of flavor will select the favorite Amstel. I'm going out on a limb here and picking an upset win from this fine historic British Ale with Pride.

4 Kostritzer Schwazbier vs 13 Becks Dark – Two unusual dark lagers square off in this early round contest. Kostritzer from Germany is considered the yard stick for the dark lager style, and has used the same recipe for centuries. Beck's helped make the style popular in the US, and has placed highly in this bracket in past years. Close your eyes when you drink it and you won't think it's dark beer at all. If you do this and drink some of them both I'll wager that you'll prefer the German example.

6 Sam Smith's Nut Brown Ale vs 11 Newcastle Brown Ale – British Browns battle it out, each looking to move on in this bracket representing this classic English style. The popular Newcastle is very mild, making a great "starter beer" for those looking to step up in flavor from the American Lagers. Sam Smith's tangy Ringwood yeast results in a slightly more flavorful but still mild balanced brew. Can't see an upset happening here, Nut brown rules.

3 Carlsberg vs 14 Beck's Euro-Lager war of the green-bottles, unless you go into this match up with a favorite already, it'll be tough to choose one over the other. More familiar Beck's is matched up against the internationally popular lager from Scandinavia.



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I'd pick Carlsberg to maintain it's seeding in a close one, but it's hard to tell the difference between these two premium imported lagers.

7 Sam Smith's Oatmeal Stout vs 10 Young's Chocolate Stout – While most American beer drinkers think of Irish dry stouts like Guinness, the English have always liked a sweeter, creamier version of the style which is considered “sweet stout”. In this contest, two classics duke it out, with Young's packing a wallop of real chocolate flavor vs Sam's more classic chewy grainy recipe. If you haven't tried a chocolate beer, you need to try Young's at least once – an elite 8 selection in previous years. I see Young's moving on here.

2 Fullers ESB vs 15 McEwan's Scotch Ale - Not the first battle between Scotland and England for certain, these two great beers from the British Isles are worthy opponents. Fullers is the classic “extra special bitter” balanced yet satisfying enough for all beer connoisseurs. McEwan's helped spread the popularity of their traditional caramel-tinged ale style to the US. Highly favored Fullers will be just popular enough to move on to the next round.

Southern European Region

1 Chimay Blue vs 16 Karmilet Tripel – Chimay has ruled Beer Menu Madness for years and it's spicy Blue is the standard of complex, powerful Belgian style ales. Karmilet is a surprisingly finely balanced lighter bodied Belgian that still packs a punch of spicy flavor. This matchup of Belgian brands and styles is interesting, and I recommend Karmilet to any beer enthusiast, but they won't upset Chimay this year.

8 Aventinus Dark Lager vs 9 Tucher Doppelbock – An interesting early matchup of darker more full bodied German styles. Doppelbock is a stronger lager beer by design, originally brewed by Monks to sustain them through lent. Aventinus's beer in this pairing is a bit lighter but still flavorful. In a very close contest I see Aventinus moving on to the next round.

5 Chimay Red vs 12 Celebrator Double Bock – Chimay's “lighter” style, Red has also appeared in a number of “Elite Eights” over the years. Chimay's familiar spiciness is tamed just a little in this beer, while Celebrator's rich and powerful Double Bock is dominated by its strong malty profile. Celebrator is a really exceptional example of the Double Bock style, but the power of the Chimay brand is just too much for an early round upset.

4 Abbey De Leffe Blonde vs 13 Grimbergen Blonde – How often do you get to see a competitive matchup between two fine blonde Abby's? This catfight pits two of the more popular lighter abbey style ales against each other to see who will represent this style in the next round. Both offer light but attractive bodies with a little bit of interesting spice. De Leffe is the more popular choice in this pairing.

6 Duvel vs 11 Piraat – Hold on to your seat with both hands for this battle of strong Belgian golden ales. Unlike the New Jersey “Duvels” and the Pittsburgh “Piraats” both of these beers are real consistent winners. Duvel is a hell of a beer with lots of foamy head and a strong spicy body, while Piraat's lighter demeanor belies it's high



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alcoholic content. Can't beat the Duvel, though Piraat will make you walk right off the plank.

3 *Stella Artois vs 14 Pilsner Urquell* – Belgian Stella lager has taken the US by storm, thanks largely to its marketing and reputation, while Urquell (“the original”) is the Czech standard by which all of the Pilsner style brewers imitate. This should be a clear upset based on taste and quality, but the powerful reputation of the Stella brand may just keep her on top.

7 *Delirium Tremens vs 10 Lindeman's Framboise*. Can a raspberry flavored lightly powered Belgian beer upset the fiercely powerful Belgian triple style elephant of a beer? This pairing is quite the contrast between a refined fruity “small beer” and the take no prisoners swashbuckling quaff on Delirium. While a Lindeman's with dessert is a fine beer experience, can't see this mouse frightening the elephant in this round. Try the pink elephant and see if you get the “tremens” too.

2 *Hoegaarden White Ale vs 15 Grimbergen Amber* – Hoegaarden revived the historic Belgian white style of beer first in Europe, then the US. Unlike German wheat beers (weiss) the Belgian white style offers the drinker the same light body but a clove-like and somewhat lemony flavor due to its unique yeast. Grimbergen Amber on the other hand is a mild ale, refreshing but otherwise largely unremarkable. Hard core Hoegaarden fans will ensure no early round upset in this contest.