Changelog:

March 15 - Updated to reflect armor changes to certain heroes, including Johanna, Tyrael, Varian. Plus other misc. changes.

February 22 - Updated to reflect various changes to multiple heroes.

January 5 - Updated Anub'Arak and Arthas to reflect patch changes re: Armor.

December 18 - Changed Artanis, Dehaka, Diablo, and Varian sections to reflect extensive changes.

November 19 - Added Varian, updated ETC and Muradin.

September 29 Patch - Zarya added, Artanis changed to reflect shield bug fix, ETC updated to reflect multiple changes.

August 23 Patch - Stitches and Cho are basically the same, Tyrael is very slightly worse in small ways but not enough to downgrade any of his categories.

August 10 Patch - No significant changes. Leoric's engage theoretically slightly better with Royal Focus, but not enough to upgrade him a tier.

July 27 Patch - Downgraded Artanis's sponging ability, due to the fact that new shields will no longer stack over old shields. Much easier to kill him with coordinated burst. The small health buff doesn't really compensate for the nerf.

The Art of the Tank

Tanking, in HotS, is roughly about four things.

- Engaging for your team.
- Peeling for your team.
- Being a mobile ward.
- Being a damage sponge.

Engaging

This applies to both team fights and ganking. The tank is the hero that should almost always go in first. They set up the area of the fight. Imagine a line down the middle of the map. You only

cross that line if you have a clear advantage (talent tier, numbers, cooldowns, something). In a very similar way every battle space is divided in half. Let us take Infernal Shrines. The monsters spawn roughly evenly across the shrine and you can drag them back to your side, which we'll call anchoring. Crossing over that line, if you do, is a judgement made by the tank with the rest of the team as follow up. This is the reason, despite not getting the glamor, if you talk to most pro teams they'll tell you that the tank is what wins or loses games. They pick every single engagement. They have to, because if anyone else went in first they would just be obliterated by the amount of focus fire that happens in the pro scene. When ganking tanks are the start of the CC chain. They pick when the gank happens, they pick when fights happen, from the beginning of the game to the end of the game. The tank is the buffer that manages nearly every interaction his team has with the enemy team.

Peeling

This is not as easy as it sounds. A tank is in the front line, starting a fight. If someone gets around both him and the bruiser and into the back line it is his job to turn around and create space for his backline to disengage, get a heal, etc. Unless you are specifically body blocking the focus target from disengaging, you want to be physically between as many of the enemy team and your backline as possible at all times. This means tanks need to always be aware of where the other nine heroes are in a fight

Mobile Ward aka Chinese Bush Meta

"Where is the enemy team?" As the tank you should always be thinking about the answer to this question. Your job is to be between as many of the enemy team and your team as possible. That means you take the more dangerous path on a rotation. You don't clear waves; you hide in bushes and protect the person clearing the wave from getting ganked. You don't take camps; you're in the nearest bush protecting your team from invasions while they take the camp. You are always active on the map, granting vision, preventing ganks, slowing enemy rotations, and setting up ganks, which involves spending a lot of time mounted and looking at the minimap. As a tank, your survivability and ability to escape usually eclipses that of other heroes. The tank manages the enemy team, while the rest of the team manages the map.

Damage Sponge

Imagine for a moment you drafted a standard team composition with the lowest damage dealer for each role. Lowest damage tank, lowest ranged damage dealer, lowest damage support, lowest damage bruiser, lowest damage flex hero. Go into try mode and do one rotation of basic abilities on the target dummy and note down the numbers. Do it for each hero. Now add them up. The heroes who can live through that amount of damage, with very few exceptions, are the tanks. Vision is very limited in HotS. In a lot of cases the only way you get vision is by physically walking into an area. The only heroes who can do this and live through the potential burst, or over a long period of time absorb the inevitable poke, are tanks. They have damage mitigation,

some kind of self-heal, larger health pools, or any combination of the above. Tanks treat their health pool as a resource that they trade for enemy cooldowns and vision of the enemy team.

Rating the Tanks

There are always going to be some difficulties in rating a given hero, because HotS is a complex enough game that any weakness of a given hero in a given role can be patched via strong drafting. That said, focusing solely on these four criteria I think we can easily outline where the strengths and weaknesses are of all the tanks. For a more detailed breakdown of the potential strengths and weaknesses of each tank, you can reference their individual guides.

Blue: Very Strong
Green: Strong.
Yellow: Acceptable
Orange: Draft to patch this weakness.
Red: Cannot do this, must be compensated for.

Anub'Arak

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-a-crypt-lord-a-guide-to-anubarak/

Engaging: Very strong. Both for setting up ganks and engaging in team fights. With the variable distance on Burrow Charge, the ability to increase its range, and the immediate potential for a follow up in-line stun Anub'Arak has everything you could want on right in his basic kit.

Peeling: With two stuns in his base kit, one of which provides mobility, and the option of adding movement speed to his W Anub can create a lot of space for his team. Slow being added to his E and Bed of Bards at 4 increase Anub'Arak's peel options enough that this has been upgraded.

Mobile Ward: With a self shield to mitigate burst, an escape that bypasses terrain and gives him frames of invulnerability, and the semi-controllable ability to spawn beetles that will try and find their way to the nearest lane acting as scouts Anub'Arak is a stellar mobile ward.

Damage Sponge: Here is where Anub'Arak can fall a little short. If he is against a heavy ability damage team, he does exceptionally well. Dampen Magic is a ridiculously strong talent and a fair amount of the strong ability damage dealers rely on skill shots, which he can absorb with beetles. Plus his new "Spell Armor" giving him baseline ability mitigation is very strong. Locust Swarm provides him a potentially substantial self-heal in full team fights and spamming his W adds up. However he still has a relatively small health pool for a tank. Versus sustained auto-attack damage heroes like Greymane, he melts exceptionally quickly.

Artanis

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-a-hierarch-the-discipline-of-artanis/

Engaging: Not great. With built-in Zealot Charge Artanis now has a small gap closer, but it isn't really sufficient to call it an engage mechanic. But his new combo of Q+E in various combinations very much is, though it is difficult to use.

Peeling: Physical displacement of 1-2 enemies over a large distance and Suppression Pulse both offer very good "save" mechanics. The only problem is the extensive cooldown on Phase Prism baseline.

Mobile Ward: God awful. Artanis's only survival mechanic comes from never disengaging. If you get caught scouting, you need to be able to disengage.

Damage Sponge: Artanis is in a weird place in this category. In theory if the damage is sufficiently staggered he doesn't ever die.

Arthas

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-the-lich-king-heroes-of-the-storm-arthas-guide/

Engaging: The lack of personal mobility makes Arthas's engage mechanics somewhat lackluster, but the range on his root plus certain talents can bring it up. His heroics have a huge impact here. Singdragosa gives Arthas a great long range engage. The slow enables Arthas to walk up to the enemy team and keep them in his Frozen Tempest, really forcing fights. Army of the Dead should usually be the bruiser heroic. On the ganking front, Howling Blast from a bush, with its substantial range, is amazing at setting up ganks and the follow up slow from Frozen Tempest gives him strong body blocking. His only weakness in this regard is no personal mobility until potentially Death's Advance at 20. He is a slow, lumbering hulk; if he doesn't come into an engagement either mounted or via Sindragosa, then he is usually easily evadable.

Peeling: Very strong. Getting past an Arthas to get into the back line is nigh impossible with his aura. Add in his root, and even potentially more roots at 16+, and it is just a nightmare if he is positioned well.

Mobile Ward: Not fantastic. Without any personal mobility can easily end up in a situation where he finds the entire team… and can't get away. Oops.

Damage Sponge: Highly talent dependent. Self-heal on Q gives him reasonable sustain versus poke. Rune Tap combined with his trait is good for both a small burst heal and sustained self healing. Icebound Fortitude can help him deal with CC chains and extreme focus, but in a large sense all his damage sponge abilities are reactive or need to be used just barely before things go sideways. Can be very strong, can be near zero. If you have strong engage in your team you can also take Army of the Dead over Sindragosa, which does enhance your sponging. His new Physical Armor makes this slightly better, but not enough to save him from over extending.

Chen

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/brewmaster-chen-sutra/

Engaging: Why yes thank you I'll take a basic ability with a five second CD that immediately puts me in the perfect position to body block my opponent. Both heroics are strong engage options and you have options for near permanent 40% slow depending on talents.

Peeling: Limited by the lack of hard CC and now lacks a strong slow.

Mobile Ward: There are few things more satisfying than being able to use the enemy team's correct play against them, body blocks actually help Chen. Position dependent but normally a strong Chen player can always get away safely while playing scout. With the new talent Keg Toss once the quest is completed having a low cooldown ranged bush check upgrades Chen in this category considerably.

Damage Sponge: Versus teams without sufficient displacement/stuns Chen literally just has to stand there and drink. it will take them a very, very long time to kill him. Versus heavier teams with lots of stuns and displacements, it gets tricker. Chen is quite possibly the best tank in the game in this category if a team has no stuns or displacements, but gets exponentially worse for each one the enemy team adds to its composition.

Cho

Engaging: Relatively poor outside of Upheaval. His Surging Fist has a clear wind up making it relatively easy to interrupt or dodge.

Peeling: Bouncing people around with Q, when you're very good at it, can work. Quite reasonable with Hammer of Twilight

Mobile Ward: In terms of escape mechanics, quite strong, but tying up two heroes to do a job normally done by one is a huge investment. It will just never be optimal. Comes with vision granting abilities.

Damage Sponge: If you start a fight at full health, you will be able to absorb a ton of damage between the self-heal, the shields, and armor when you need it. But large health pools are a once per fight resource since most healing is fixed numbers and not percent based, so make something happen earlier rather than later.

Special Note: It is usually best to draft Cho'Gall assuming Cho is a tank who will only peel for Gall. Which means you should have a ranged damage, a real tank or a strong bruiser, and a support in the other three slots. If you draft him as a solo tank make sure every other hero has strong escapes in their own kits.

Dehaka

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-a-primal-zerg-adapting-to-dehaka/

Engaging: Are you near a bush? Fantastic. Are you **not** near a bush? Awful. Versus teams that just kind of stand there, landing a Drag means death if your team can focus fire. The primary problem with Dehaka in team fight scenarios is that he should be the last person to show up ideally where normally the tank should be the first person to show up. Hence the more orange than blue.

Peeling: Difficult. Drag has such a long CD that if you used it as an engage it won't be available for peel, but Dark Swarm allows you get in quick body blocks by walking straight through the enemy. Lurker Strain does give essentially a talented Face Melt, albeit on a 20sec CD, which helps a bit.

Mobile Ward: Your only escape, Brushstalker, is on a relatively long CD, has a cast time, and can be interrupted. It is also your primary mobility mechanic to allow you to get around to watch for rotations in the first place. Not really high marks.

Damage Sponge: If your team is getting kills to replenish your essence, fantastic. You can dodge the high impact skill shots with your Burrow as well. In extended fights where no one dies, you may as well be made of wet paper.

Diablo

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-the-lord-of-terror-the-codex-gigas-of-diablo/

Engaging: Arguably the best engage of any tank in his base kit. Immediately sets up body blocks. Follow up, if timed correctly, is always guaranteed to land. Works for both team fights and ganks. Due to the fact that Diablo must go in, if your team doesn't follow up right away it ends up just being a free kill for the enemy team.

Peeling: His engage and his peel use the same abilities on relatively long CDs, so it usually ends up being fairly poor. If his abilities are actually available, exceptionally strong. With Domination at 16 they are basically always available and this goes to green.

Mobile Ward: His only escape depends on having a target in the right position to Shadow Charge to. Diablo is simply always better on offense; defensively sitting in a bush scouting for his team is always slightly weaker than aggressively pushing into enemy territory and sitting in their bushes with your team waiting for a pick off.

Damage Sponge: Large health pool, when you have souls, resist on Q, and mitigation or health regen at 7 did a lot to increase his overall tankiness. Once you're low, you're out of the fight unless you're intentionally trading your life for a more valuable target though. Make something happen sooner rather than later.

E.T.C

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/rock-god-e-t-c-tauren-myth-legend/

Engaging: There is this ability called Powerslide and despite recent nerfs it is pretty good at starting fights. An area of effect stun that has one of the longest engage ranges of any tank and is nigh impossible to miss. It puts you on the far side of your opponent ready to body block and when the stun wears off you just displace him with Face Melt a little further away from safety. Both Stage Dive and Mosh Pit are strong team fight heroics when timed correctly.

Peeling: Stuns, displacement. The only real weakness here is the relatively long CDs of Power Slide and Face Melt and the fact that they are used for both engaging and peeling so you always need to be mindful.

Mobile Ward: Long range escape that stuns, bounce body blocks away.

Damage Sponge: Easily spammable, small self-heal and a relatively high health pool but only one burst mitigation talent which comes at 16 and isn't ideal to take. Very vulnerable to burst and crowd control.

Johanna

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/crusader-book-johanna/

Engaging: Poor for ganks. Johanna is very nearly the only tank on this list that cannot help her team set up ganks in any meaningful sense. Her only strong engages are her Heroics, which have considerable CDs for the purpose. The only way she really enables ganks is via wave

clear, which allows more of her team to rotate more frequently, setting up a numbers advantage in a given lane.

Peeling: Arguably the strongest area peel in the game. Condemn is amazingly powerful when combined with Punish at just getting people off the back line and Shield Glare mitigates a lot of damage, particularly versus AA heavy teams.

Mobile Ward: Questionable. The only true escape in her whole kit is one of her heroics. She can negate CC chains on herself on demand. However unlike most tanks, she has wave clear and should be drafted with that in mind, which means time spent in a bush is time not spent contributing in one of her strongest areas.

Damage Sponge: Starts out strong, can be made considerably stronger via talents, but mostly comes from good use of activatables at clutch times, so requires a lot of forethought and understanding of enemy team's heroes. Too much ability damage on the enemy team and you're made of paper.

Leoric

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/spooky-scary-skeleton-guide-leoric/

Engaging: Well there is Entomb and…. That's about it. Even with Paralyzing Rage and Wraith Walking into a fight, Leoric's engage options are relatively weak outside of Entomb, which itself has weaknesses against heroes with abilities to escape it. Thankfully it has a relatively low CD so can be used for both ganks and team fights. Pre-10 he is better off using his wave clear to get to 10 faster.

Peeling: Paralyzing Rage makes for good peel, easily creating space for your team. Without this talent, Leoric's ability to peel basically drops to near nothing. You can even do it while you're dead.

Mobile Ward: With Wraith Walk, quite strong, plus he can do it while dead, a unique advantage.

Damage Sponge: Ever since the nerf to Drain Hope and the scaling changes, Leoric's ability to absorb damage basically is at the point where people question if Leoric is even a tank. Even with his engage being conditional, this is by far his weakest category.

Muradin

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/mountain-king-manual-muradin-skull-cracking/

Engaging: Can come out of nowhere and stun you with Dwarf Toss into Stormbolt. Almost all his talents are either options for more engage or more sponge. He will arguably be the best tank in at least one of the categories if talented appropriately and you get to pick which one. This is why Muradin is so contested in pro play.

Peeling: Built in slow, built in stun, both on relatively short CDs that can be decreased via talents. Mobility to be where needs to be. Total package.

Mobile Ward: Not in a fight? Regen to full health basically instantly. Get caught? Nope, I'm over this nearby terrain feature, mounted up, and gone. Other than Ghost Leoric there is no better tank in this category.

Damage Sponge: Get poked? Back up a few seconds and heal to full. Hard engaging? Let me just increase my health pool by nearly fifty percent for 20 seconds. Oh I have the option of taking a percent heal for five percent of my massive health pool per enemy hero hit with with an ability on an 8 second (potentially lower) CD that can apply twice and I can talent into an activatable that heals me for forty percent of my health if for some bizarre reason I take more than the nearly 10k damage the above resources already took care of. Muradin is the damage sponge god of HotS tanking.

Rexxar

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/beastmaster-rexxar-bear-necessities/

Engaging: If Misha's control weren't so awkward Rexxar would actually get high marks in this category. He is essentially the only tank that can engage with no real risk of any kind. As it is he suffers from the same "need to engage from a bush" issue that Arthas does, but with less quality body blocking because Misha is a pain to control. That said it is like a mini version of Power Slide on a shorter CD, if there were a talent to increase the range or the range were higher base this would easily be green. Note that while Rexxar is mounted, Misha is faster which helps a ton.

Peeling: Weirdly strong. The ability to actually be in the backline and the frontline at the same time, stunning the enemy front line and slowing the enemy dive is a lot of multitasking, but when executed well it is amazing.

Mobile Ward: Imagine you had a pet Murky you could put in every nearby bush. That is what Misha is like, except not as squishy.

Damage Sponge: Good marks here. Having your own self-heal in addition to the support healing and the rather exceptional mitigation and regen talents available in his talent tree make Misha a great sponge. Plus remember that thing about trading tank health for enemy CDs and

vision? If you secure a kill while losing Misha, that is a win. The downside here is that Rexxar himself is incredibly squishy.

Sonya

Special Note: Sonya is not a tank. Never draft her as a tank. If you are doing some kind of triple bruiser or double bruiser with double support comp, play as if you do not have a tank. Never think Sonya can fill the tank role. This can be confusing as she is literally the only hero with the "Warrior" label who can never tank.

Stitches

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-an-abomination-stitches-want-to-play/

Engaging: Sitches only real engage is his hook. Good hooks come from the back line, not the front, which means the entire team needs to alter their style of play to account for this. Putrid Bile, with the speed increase and the slow, can work as an engage especially if it comes from a flank but in the end it is hit your hooks or go home.

Peeling: Slows, Hooks, Putrid Bile. Nothing exceptional but decent. Note that friendly hooks can act as peel.

Mobile Ward: Kind of like Diablo, good on offense/looking for hooks, bad on defense. Get caught and die. If you take Hungry for More and finish the globe stacking the difference in movement speed can be a factor.

Damage Sponge: With appropriate talents, particularly on maps where you fight in lane, there are small monsters to eat, or versus heroes who have targetable summons, he becomes nigh unkillable. Otherwise we are back to the "high health pool is a once-per-fight resource" issue.

Tyrael

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/hand-justice-guide-tyrael/

Engaging: Relatively low CD teleport that can be talented to be lower and slows, enabling massive body blocks. He has a heroic that allows not only him but his entire team survive any hard engage decision. After he has Holy Ground the ability to completely cut fights in half or deny retreats is amazing.

Peeling: Requires cooperation from your team. Righteousness helps mitigate damage and El'Druin's Might does slow, but the Smite is the real peel here. Your team needs to understand

that Smite increases their movement speed, enabling mobility. The space that creates allows Tyrael to get in there and body block for you. If your team doesn't cooperate this is awful. With the recent changes to Tyrael this had to be downgraded somewhat.

Mobile Ward: El'Druin's Might has a slight animation delay; you need to cast it, the sword needs to travel, and only then can you reactivate it to get to safety. The increased speed from Smite also slows you down momentarily because of the animation as well. But it works well enough and later Holy Ground makes getting away from nearly anything incredibly easy.

Damage Sponge: You sponge not only directly for yourself, but Righteousness add more survivability to your whole team. This quality makes Tyrael the most support-y of all the tanks, which is a useful subcategory to have when playing with heavy dive heroes. Would be marked higher if his personal mitigation or health pool were higher. Spell Armor makes him slightly better against ability damage heavy teams.

Varian

http://www.mmogames.com/gamearticles/being-the-high-king-the-shield-and-swords-of-varian-wrynn/

Engaging: Charge has a relatively short range and is essentially the only engage tool Varian has, though he can Lion's Fang and use the slow to catch up to an out of position target and then Charge but Charge itself is his only good engage tool. Once he is on top of them, Taunt is a lot of lockdown for blow up comps but the cooldown is too long to use it for both peel and lockdown, so pick one.

Peeling: Zero, Varian fundamentally cannot peel.

Mobile Ward: Charge to a convenient minion and a relatively low-cd ranged ability to bush check, with no anti-CC ability anywhere in your kit. So worse than Johanna overall, who is not rated highly in this category.

Damage Sponge: Until 10, you straight up cannot take much damage unless you took Shield Wall, which you should. All of your level 7 talents are about health restore or additional mitigation and in particular full Parry build allows you to absorb a ton of damage, especially at 10 with bonus health and armor.

Zarya

Note: Zarya is a high damage hero who is not a tank, but has some utility. Do not draft her as a tank, draft her as a bruiser and go for damage and the utility of shields.