

Hard Justice 2005 – With A Legit Celebrity Guest Referee

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Date: May 15, 2005

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 775

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Don West

Final PPV in this three show set as we have AJ in the main event as he should have been most of this year. We also have a celebrity guest referee for that main event in the form of MMA legend Tito Ortiz. I can live with celebrities if they're, you know, actual celebrities. Also on this card we have a twenty man Gauntlet For The Gold for the #1 contendership which should be dull. Let's get to it.

We open the show with a ten bell salute to Chris Candido who died following a freak accident at the previous PPV. He broke his leg and somehow it messed up the blood flow. I don't remember it exactly.

The opening video is about how war is human nature.

Team Canada vs. Apollo/Sonny Siaki

Apollo is a Puerto Rican guy I think. This is Williams/Young instead of Roode/Young. Siaki is a Samoan but not related to the famous Samoan family. The Canadians jump them to start but get knocked to the floor just as fast. We officially start with Apollo vs. Williams. Off to Siaki quickly who speeds things up. Neckbreaker gets two on Young. The non-Canadians hit one of the biggest backdrops I've ever seen on Young.

D'Amore screams at the announcers about something. That distracts Apollo and the Canadians take over. Elbow gets two for Young. Apollo manages to get in a knee lift which is

enough to bring in both Siaki and Williams. Powerslam gets two on Williams. D'Amore hooks the foot of Siaki on a suplex attempt but it only gets two. Apollo spears Young down but he gets caught in a pretty awful looking top rope rana by Williams. With everything falling apart, A-1 (another Canadian) runs in and Jackhammers Siaki so Williams can steal the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine for an opener but the match itself was nothing of note. Apollo and Siaki both looked great but they didn't have much going for them other than that. Apollo went back to Puerto Rico soon and was a much bigger deal. Siaki wasn't around much longer, at least not in anything important.

Ortiz, AJ and Jarrett all arrived earlier today.

Matt Bentley/Trinity vs. Chris Sabin/Traci

Tenay calls a mixed tag a very unique match in professional wrestling. Has he never watched Wrestlemania 6? These are two rivalries that were joined into one match. Michael Shane has changed his name back to Matt Bentley again too. The genders can mix here but we start with the girls. Trinity slaps her and it's time for a chase scene. I think Traci is on the good guys' team but I really don't know.

They exchange small packages for about 15 seconds until Traci gets the advantage. Monkey flip puts Trinity down for two. Off to the guys even though I don't think Sabin was tagged in. Cradle Shock is countered as is Bentley's superkick. Trinity interferes and Shane suplexes him off the top. Trinity trips Sabin again as we're waiting on the hot tag to Traci. This might not be the best formulated plan.

Sabin fires off some elbows but Bentley pulls him back down by the hair. After a chinlock by Bentley, Sabin comes back with an elbow and tries a tornado DDT. Bentley escapes that but a BIG enziguri puts Bentley down. Double tags bring in the girls

and Traci cleans house. She tries something off the top but Trinity shoves her to the floor. They fight up the ramp and Trinity slams her. The guys have been forgotten it appears. Oh here's Sabin to clothesline Bentley. Trinity hits a top rope rana on Sabin, drawing a Lita chant. Traci low blows Sabin and Bentley superkicks Trinity. Another one to Sabin gets the pin.

Rating: C-. Not great here and while the ending was surprising, that doesn't mean I really care about it. Traci and trinity feuded for the better part of eternity and it never really had a definitive conclusion that I remember. This wasn't bad but it pretty much came and went with whatever the new development was in the story.

Ad for Slammiversary.

Team Canada says they're back. D'Amore gets in a great jab at the Orlando fans: "You've got a Samoan and a Puerto Rican in there against two Canadians and the idiots chant USA." They plug their chances in the Gauntlet for the Gold tonight. Roode is the first entrant. They see the name of the second entrant and say it's like sending a one legged man into a butt kicking contest.

Dusty meets with Tito Ortiz and tells him to call things down the line but if he needs to take matters into his own hands, don't hesitate.

Jeff Hardy isn't here (legit no show, he was suspended soon after) so Raven says he doesn't care who his replacement is. He wants to maim someone. Raven knows his opponent but they keep censoring his name.

Raven vs. ???

This is a Clockwork Orange House of Fun match, which means there are a bunch of weapons and one side of a cage. West says the opponent is Sean Waltman before the entrances. So why censor it a few seconds ago? Waltman comes from the other side

of the arena to jump Raven from behind. He pulls down a trashcan and knocks Raven to the outside with it. Raven is busted open early.

Waltman uses Raven's drop toehold into the trashcan but the can is used to break up the Bronco Buster. Out to the floor and Raven digs into the forehead in an attempt to cut Waltman open. He rakes the head across the steel and Waltman is indeed busted. Raven gets a pair of trashcan lids and alternates with shots from both arms. Raven is cut bad. Waltman sends Raven into a can out of desperation.

Raven grabs the ankle (which is a recurring move for him it seems) but Sean escapes and hits the Bronco Buster this time. Out to the floor and it's table time. Waltman puts him on the table and climbs up onto the post (squeezing between two of the things holding up weapons) and hits a flip dive through Raven through the table. Back in Raven hits a DDT out of nowhere for two. You know for a finisher, that move doesn't finish all that often.

Raven runs him up the ramp and throws Waltman off of it, sending him through a table. It's falls count anywhere apparently and Raven gets two. Back at ringside and Raven finds handcuffs, another recurring thing in this company's early PPV days. He cuffs Waltman to the post and beats him with a kendo stick.

He wants a submission but Waltman says to hit him harder. Dusty comes back and frees Waltman and he can kick the chair that Raven had back into his face. Now he hits the alternating lid shots and beats Raven with the stick. Waltman staple guns Raven's head but Raven manages to throw him through the cage wall and fall on top for the pin.

Rating: B-. Better brawling match than you would expect here but the big problem was the lack of a feud for this to go off of. That's not their fault of course as Waltman was a

substitute so I'm certainly not going to hold that one against them. Much better match than I was expecting as Waltman proves again that he can go with the smaller guys much better than the large one.

Tito gives AJ some instructions, as in basic rules of the match. They shake hands.

We recap the 3 Live Kru vs. Outlaw feud. Outlaw is Billy Gunn who is apparently trying to break up the Kru. Monty Brown recently turned on DDP so let's have a tag match. This resulted in a bunch of problems in the Kru, mainly over the possibility that BG is going to bail on the Kru and reform the New Age Outlaws.

Page has a message from BG James, saying he's not here. Truth pops up and says he'll be Page's partner.

Ron Killings/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Monty Brown/Kip James

Page starts with Brown and there's not much going on in the first minute. Rollup gets one for Page. Nothing has happened in the first minute or so. Well nothing of note that is. Off to Outlaw who wants Killings. Wait is his name Outlaw or Kip James? We'll go with Kip James. Killings knocks him around and hits a headscissors to send James to the corner. Kip comes back with a tilt-a-whirl slam and I think we have our face in peril.

Brown hits a running knee to his back and Killings is in trouble. Back to James who gets two off a running forearm. We hit the chinlock so Page plays cheerleader. Truth hits a leg lariat out of nowhere and makes a diving tag. Discus lariat takes Brown down and another does the same to James. Helicopter Bomb gets two on Brown as James makes the save. DDP and truth keep up the offense until Phi Delta Slam (big fat guys) run in for the beating on Page. DDP Diamond Cuts one and crotches the other before Cutting him off the top. Cutter for James but Brown Pounces him for the pin.

Rating: D+. HOW WAS THAT NOT A DQ??? Two more guys came in and beat up Page but there's not a DQ in there? I'd love to be a referee just to see how messed up my mind becomes. It must be better than any other drug you could ever have. Not a great match but that's par for the course with these filler tag matches.

The Naturals say they were shocked by Candido's death and they owe their titles to him. They don't want to go into specifics about their feelings though. He taught them how to be a great team and how to be winners.

Tag Titles: The Naturals vs. America's Most Wanted

The Naturals are one of the most generic looking teams you'll ever find so I'll do my best to tell them apart. They're defending here and have never lost to AMW with the titles on the line. The champs come out with Candido's signature yellow towel. The fans chant for Candido to start. If the ending wasn't obvious already, it better be now. Storm starts with I think Chase Stevens (the other is Andy Douglas).

La Majistral gets two for Stevens. Storm controls on the mat with an armbar and it's off to Harris. Ok so Stevens is the blonde. Got it. Stevens gets two off a facejam on Storm. Middle rope sunset flip gets two for Storm as does a hard kick to the chest. Bulldog gets two for Harris. Harris clotheslines Douglas to the floor and everything breaks down out there. AMW seems to have the advantage.

Never mind as Storm misses a dive and lands on the railing. He manages to counter a whip to send Stevens upside down into the railing. A suplex on the ramp puts Stevens down again. Douglas takes a slingshot into the post and it's one advantage per team at the moment. Douglas goes shoulder first into the post as does Storm. Now Harris' shoulder goes into the post. Hopefully they get a cut of the shoulder surgery fees.

A fan holds up a chair for Storm to whip Stevens into. Did I

warp back to ECW? Douglas hits Harris in the ribs with a chair but it's still not a DQ. They haven't been in the ring for almost five minutes. The Naturals are both in control and Harris is sent back in with Douglas. They're not legal but who cares? Harris comes out of nowhere with a right hand and a clothesline in the corner.

The Naturals have a two on one advantage now but Storm comes back in for the Eye of the Storm on Stevens. Everyone gets up and we go to the corner for a pretty low level Tower of Doom. The idea of tagging has been completely forgotten here. Catatonic is countered into an FU by Stevens for two. Storm breaks up Natural Disaster and superkicks Stevens. They load up the Death Sentence but Harris gets shoved off the top, allowing Stevens to roll up Storm and put his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Rating: C+. The match was fun but the lack of tagging so early got kind of old. I've seen worst though and AMW was always worth looking at. They were starting to slip at this point though and would turn heel soon if my memory serves me right. This was nothing great though and I don't think anyone cared about the Naturals.

Tito Ortiz beats up an annoying security guard and talks to Jeff. Everything is cool apparently.

We recap the X Title match. Shocker won an Xscape match at Lockdown and then had to win another one to get the shot against Daniels tonight. He says he'll win the title for Mexico.

X-Division Title: Shocker vs. Christopher Daniels

Feeling out process to start with Daniels having a slight advantage. They head to the apron and Shocker hits a headscissors to take Daniels to the floor, followed by a suicide dive. Back in Daniels takes over and hooks a very quick Koji Clutch. Shocker comes back with a lot of chops and

some clotheslines. Frog splash gets two.

Daniels plays possum and hits a Downward Spiral to get momentum back again. BME is overshoot so he settles for a split legged moonsault which gets two. Shocker hits a low dropkick to the face of Daniels and the champ is in trouble again. Shocker goes up but Daniels nails him and tries a superplex.

That gets countered into a SICK looking gordbuster with Daniels landing straight on his head. Off to an STF but Daniels bites the hand to escape. Now Shocker tries a superplex but Daniels counters into Angel's Wings off the top to retain. Cool ending and thankfully he didn't kick out like the announcers implied he might.

Rating: C+. I wasn't wild on this, again mainly due to a lack of story. This was something that WCW did a lot back in the day: bring in a foreign guy and say he's one of the best in whatever country then have the champion beat him. It's cool to bring in international talent but at the same time, those names are just names to people who aren't familiar with wrestling in that country. Decent match with a cool ending though.

Video on the Gauntlet For The Gold, which is a Royal Rumble style match but in the end the final two have a singles match for the win. Abyss won the final spot (#20) on Impact.

Gauntlet For The Gold

Roode is #1 and the surprise entrant Zach Gowen is #2. Get the joke from earlier now? Roode steals the prosthetic leg. West: "Put it back!" but Gowen comes back with one footed dropkicks and a reverse DDT. Eric Young comes in at #3. The intervals are only a minute long which includes their time coming to the ring. Remember at this point it's over the top to eliminate people.

Roode gets a pretty evil one legged giant swing on Gowen.

Cassidy Riley is #4. Ok now the clock doesn't start until he gets to the ring. He helps against the Canadians and Gowen hits a leg lariat on Roode. Here's Skipper at #5 and the clock is under Young rules again. Skipper takes a lariat from Roode but hits a nice moonsault to take him down. The ring is getting a little full now so everyone has something to do.

Shark Boy comes in at #6 to a nice reaction. Thank goodness he's not Stone Cold yet. He won a match on the preshow to get in. Sharky hits a neckbreaker on Young but Gowen takes him down. Shark Boy bites Gowen hard enough that Gowen goes out. So we have our first elimination. #7 is another Canadian in the form of A-1, the big power guy. He cleans house with clotheslines and stomps on Riley.

#8 is Chris Sabin. In a Matrix style move, he sets for a tornado DDT on Young but with his feet in the air, he kicks EVERYONE ELSE in the chest in a big circle before hitting the DDT. That was cool. Petey Williams is #9 to put the Canadians at full strength. He tries a Destroyer on Sharky but gets backdropped to the apron. Shark Boy goes after him and is eliminated by A-1. Eric puts out Riley to get some people out of the ring.

Sonny Siaki is #10 and he goes after the Canadians. Skipper gets REALLY stupid and tries to walk the ropes. Roode is like boy you're stupid and clotheslines him out. Lance Hoyt is #11 and he has his own cheering section. Young is easily tossed out by Hoyt and Team Canada is down to three. Sabin can't get Williams out and Bentley is #12. He superkicks Hoyt but is taken out by Sabin who goes out at the same time. They fight on the floor as the Canadians put out Siaki.

Here's Jerelle Clark at #13. He's just an X-Division guy. There are five people in at the moment: Roode, A-1, Williams, Clark and Hoyt. The Canadians help Williams on a Destroyer to put Clark out. Mikey Batts is #14 and he fires off some kicks to take down the Canadians. He's another X-Division guy. He

and Hoyt team up on Canada as The Outlaw Kip James is #15.

A HUGE cobra clutch slam kills Batts and the fans want to see it again. #16 is Trytan but Hoyt hits a big boot before Trytan even gets in. Batts is gone. Trytan is chokeslamming everyone in sight and hits a spinebuster on Hoyt. Ron Killings is #17 and gets powerslammed very quickly. As Trytan poses, all three Canadians team up to throw him out.

Apollo is #18 and he cleans house. He and Kip chop it out but Apollo charges and is low bridged out. BG James is #19 but the Canadians break up the staredown between the Outlaws. Hoyt kicks Roode out but Roode helps A-1 to get rid of Hoyt. The Outlaws team up on Petey and A-1, tossing them both out. Abyss comes in at #20 and knocks both Outlaws out to get us down to the final two.

So it's Truth vs. Abyss for the shot and it's a regular one on one match, meaning over the top doesn't mean anything anymore. Abyss throws him to the floor anyway and tries to hit him with a chair but it's taken away by the referee. Back inside now and Abyss pounds on Killings in the corner. Truth speeds things up and hits a leg lariat and a headbutt for two. Abyss gets a big boot and brings in the chain but that gets taken away.

Instead he'll use a chair because the referee takes forever to put the chain in the corner. Truth gets the chair and hits Abyss twice in the head for two. We actually get a ref bump in this match. Is this really needed? Truth checks on him and walks into a chokeslam onto the chair for a very delayed two. Abyss tries to Earthquake down onto the chair onto Killings but Truth crotches him on the chair instead. Not that it matters though as Killings jumps into the Black Hole Slam and it's over.

Rating: C+. This wasn't a horrible battle royal and the one minute intervals keep things moving fast enough. I'm not sure

how much I like the one on one match at the end but it's not a terrible idea I guess. Still though, like most non-Rumbles, this wasn't a very interesting battle royal. Not awful though.

We recap the main event which is based around the idea of AJ being a once in a generation athlete while Jarrett is the old guard. AJ beat Abyss to get this shot. Tito Ortiz is the referee.

NWA World Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. AJ Styles

Tito Ortiz is guest referee. Jarrett has been champion almost a year at this point. As is customary in wrestling, the previous title reigns of the challenger are only brushed over. They fight over a lockup to start and Tito breaks things up when they get to the ropes. Feeling out process to start as they're treating this like a huge match. AJ speeds things up which of course gives him the advantage.

Jarrett slides to the floor which is a good idea for him as it slows the match down a lot. Back in and Jeff throws right hands. Jeff tells Tito that they were forearms. That's so Memphis and it's a great way to get heat on you. AJ kicks him down and hits a knee drop for two. Jarrett goes for the knee but can't do a lot of damage on it as Styles fights back. Jeff kicks the knee out again and hooks the Figure Four.

Tenay talks about how Jeff's strategy is to go after the leg early. He doesn't think there will be a submission here but it's going to slow AJ down for later on. And THAT IS WHAT A COMMENTATOR SHOULD BE DOING!!! Not talking about pigeons, but giving us some insight. That's not something a lot of people would pick up on so Tenay gave some analysis. Why is that never done anymore?

AJ turns it over but is skeptical about coming off the top due to the bad knee. Instead of a dive he hits a tornado DDT and hits a discus clothesline (that's a popular move in TNA) to send Jarrett to the floor. AJ jumps to the apron but Jeff

takes the knee out again. Ortiz counts but Jeff keeps breaking it up. Tito grabs Jeff by the throat and shoves him to the corner.

They head to the floor again and Jeff gets the guitar. Tito says yeah try it and AJ steals the guitar. Tito won't let AJ use it either so Styles slams it on the ground to break it. AJ pounds away on Jeff and we go back in. There's the springboard forearm and a spin kick, followed by the moonsault into the reverse DDT for two. AJ tries a rana but gets caught in a powerbomb for two.

They trade some counters until AJ gets two off a backslide and small package. AJ tries the Pele but can't quite get it so it's more like a knee to Jeff's face. Stroke is countered so Jeff hits a Styles Clash to Styles for two. AJ fights back and tries one of his own but here's Monty Brown. He accidentally Pounces Jeff but Tito is throwing Brown out. A second referee comes out but Tito won't let him count. Jeff hits AJ low and loads up a superplex but Tito pulls him down for the low blow. Jeff shoves Tito and gets knocked out so that the Spiral Tap can give Styles the title.

Rating: B-. It was good but certainly not great. It's hard not to look at this with hindsight but you kind of have to. AJ would lose the title at the next PPV and wouldn't win it back for over four years. Jarrett would get the world title back in a few months until Christian debuted and took the title to end the year.

A big celebration ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a pretty solid show with a big moment to end it. There's nothing bad on here and it would have seemed like it set up AJ's next challenger (that wouldn't be Abyss) and there was nothing really bad. It's no classic or anything, but if you're looking for an ok TNA PPV to watch, this isn't a bad choice.

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