

KB Goes To A TNA House Show

So as you may have heard, Becca and I took in the TNA house show tonight in Lexington at the baseball stadium. More details to come, but the conclusion: I don't think I've ever had more fun at a wrestling show and that includes going to a WWE pay per view. Let's get to it.

First of all, the stadium is less than 15 minutes from my house so driving was no issue. The tickets were \$15 each and include a voucher each to any Lexington Legends baseball game this season. The seats were along the third base line with a view of the ring at home plate. For you non baseball fans, we had good seats and were looking down on the ring. The ring is clearly smaller than a WWE ring but it doesn't look bad at all.

We got there at about 7:00 for a 7:30 show. At about 7:25, JB announced that you could purchase a VIP pass and meet James Storm, Gunner (tag champions as of this writing), AJ Styles, Jeff Hardy, Bully Ray (world champion) and D-Von at intermission plus get a photo in the ring with a TNA superstar to be named at the end of the show. All this was \$50 for two people so we were down there cash in hand and got the first pass handed out. This was instantly more fun than the WWE house show we took in a few months ago. Can you imagine WWE offering a chance like that to its fans?

More on that later. On with the matches.

X-Division Title: Chris Sabin vs. Kenny King

The first interesting thing was the way the wrestlers came to the ring. They came out of the right field wall and rode golf carts to the ring. There's something amusing about that and it made me chuckle every time. Also, you have to love TNA breaking its own rules as this was a one on one X Title match instead of a triple threat. The fans didn't care about King but gave Sabin some polite applause. The champion (Sabin) stomped his foot to get the fans to clap. King tried the same thing and got silence in a funny bit.

The match was fine and about what you would expect from these two. Sabin worked on the arm to start but the most notable thing to start was how loud the ring was. Every time they hit the mat it sounded like cymbals crashing together. The ring mic was turned way down for the rest of the night and it was an improvement. King snapped Sabin's neck across the top rope to take over and swung a bat like a home run. Kenny missed something off the top, Sabin hit some kicks, and Hail Sabin ended it in about 8:00. It was a good fast paced opener and the crowd was into Sabin.

Before the next match, Earl Hebner got his own entrance. He took off his regular referee shirt to reveal his YES I DID (screw Bret) shirt. He even pulled out some Bret glasses and did Hart's poses in the ring.

Knockouts Title: Mickie James vs. Velvet Sky

Velvet limped to the ring to sell the knee injury from Impact. Mickie is fully heel, but you would have no idea that was the case tonight. Surprisingly enough, if you have a gorgeous brunette in Daisy Duke shorts and a sports bra with theme music talking about being a southern girl in Kentucky, the fans are going to cheer her a lot. This match didn't do much for me although the view was very nice.

Mickie worked on the knee and took the tape off of it and the fans booed her. Yes, she attacked an injury and people booed without some complicated backstory, long winded story, or any heavy handed explanation. A heel did heelish things and the fans booed her. Mickie won with the MickieDT in about 5:30. Not much to see here.

AJ Styles vs. Garrett Bischoff

This was long and all about AJ Styles. Bischoff got no reaction from the crowd, but AJ got a standing ovation. There wasn't much to see here but Garrett didn't completely embarrass himself, meaning he's improving. AJ worked on the arm and Garrett shouted OW in a funny bit. Garrett took over with a spear and beat on AJ for a long bit but AJ came back with a dive to the floor and the springboard forearm. They rolled out of the corner and AJ got the Calf Killer for the tap out at 11:45. It was a better match than expected but AJ completely carried it.

Tag Titles: James Storm/Gunner vs. Bobby Roode/Austin Aries

As you may have heard, Storm is wrestling hurt and it's very clear if you watch him for a few seconds. Storm was introduced as the Cowboy instead of the Tennessee Cowboy to keep the Kentucky fans from booing him. Just before the bell the challengers (Aries/Roode) went to the pitcher's mound with Aries pretending to pitch as Storm caught and Gunner took a batter's stance in the ring. Storm got bored and picked up some cotton candy from a vendor to give to fans.

Roode and Aries wanted quiet from the crowd but Brian Hebner couldn't get the fans to be quiet. It was a comedy match to start with the champions sending Roode into Aries' groin. The challengers went to the floor with

Roode shaking his head and Aries doing squats to stretch things out. Everything spilled onto the floor with Storm throwing a bunch of beers into Roode's face while Gunner and Aries spent a good 45 seconds trying to suplex each other next to the pitcher's mound (Gunner won with a front suplex).

They finally got back inside and Storm played Ricky Morton. It was clear that he was moving in slow motion and doing basic stuff while the other guys did the heavy lifting. Gunner finally got the hot tag and everything broke down. Roode got a beer but walked into Closing Time to spit the beer everywhere. Aries took the Last Call (more beer everywhere) followed by a torture rack from Gunner for the win at about 20:00. This was the best and by far the most entertaining match of the night. Aries was very impressive and Becca was very entertained by him.

Next was intermission and we got to go meet the previously mentioned wrestlers. Before we got to the wrestlers, Austin Aries popped up in street clothes and waved over some people he knew. I got a fist bump and said hi to him and got a polite hello. Aries is shorter than he looks on television but seemed to be a nice guy.

There were two sets of tables set up with Bully Ray and D-Von on one side and everyone else on the other. I told D-Von that I loved the TLC matches and he gave a quiet but distinct thank you and gave me a fist bump (no handshakes for him apparently). Ray signed his name with WHC underneath it and basically punched my fist when I reached it out to him for a fist bump. He's either playing a great heel or a huge jerk in real life but it fit very well.

Next up was Jeff Hardy. A girl in front of me was one of the biggest Jeff fans in the world and was crying her eyes out from getting to meet him.

Jeff took a quick picture with her despite the security guard asking us to take pictures as Jeff signed. His match was first up after the intermission so the rush is understandable. I told him I went nuts when he won the world title and he gave a very curt thank you and shook my hand. He was very quiet but not rude or anything.

James Storm and Gunner were next and both were very nice. I told Storm I had been a big fan of AMW and he smiled and thanked me. Gunner will almost crush your hand when he shakes it so the intensity thing really suits him. I said I enjoyed his match and he said he was really enjoying teaming with James. He sounded professional for lack of a better word, but it was an odd visual to see him still in his trunks and a t-shirt. As I was talking to him, a kid in a New Orleans Saints jersey was talking to Storm and Storm asked who the Saints QB and coach were. The kid said something I couldn't hear and Gunner asked Storm what the kid said. Storm said he had no idea and didn't know the answers either and laughed.

Last up was AJ Styles who was in a hat and looking down a bit. He signed my paper and I told him I had been a fan since TNA started. He looked up and gave a polite thank you and shook my hand. That Georgia accent comes through on every word he says just like it does on TV.

After this we literally ran back to catch Earl and Brian Hebner signing pictures and Hebner's shirt for \$20 total. Earl asked if we liked the VIP signing and was happy we enjoyed it. Becca is a huge Earl Hebner fan (I don't get it either) and freaked out when he shook her hand. He asked if we had a camera so I got a quick picture of them. Earl was a nice guy and I got to ask him which referee was the evil one when Andre and DiBiase cheated Hogan out of the title in 1988 (Earl said he was the evil one, like always).



Jeff Hardy vs. Mr. Anderson

Hardy got a big pop once people realized it was his music playing. Jeff went around the front row and high fived fans while Anderson did what looked like a Nazi goose step and salute. I didn't get a good view of it but he was definitely doing the high step. There wasn't much to this at all but Anderson did Hardy's dance in a funny moment. Anderson controlled most of the match but Hardy came back with his usual stuff. The Mic Check was countered into the Twist of Fate for the pin at about 7:30. I had never seen Jeff wrestle live so this was a bit of a treat. It looked like he had an ice pack on his elbow after the match but it didn't look serious.

Bully Ray/D-Von vs. Sting/Kurt Angle

The world title belt is very shiny as you could see the reflection from across the field. Sting and Angle came out to Sting's music and both were introduced as Hall of Famers. The fans were WAY into both guys so the star power was rolling here. Angle got beaten down to start and the Dudleys hit a kind of botched reverse 3D (the one where Bully does a belly to back suplex into a D-Von neckbreaker. For some reason D-Von was doing Bully's part and then they seemed to realize they had it backwards).

Angle clotheslined D-Von down and D-Von did a Spinarooni to get back up. Sting got the hot tag and everything broke down with Angle and D-Von going outside. Sting hit Stinger Splashes on everyone but the referee was bumped just before Sting gave Ray the Death Drop. Ray hit Sting with the

chain for two and the Angle Slam set up the Scorpion Deathlock for the tap out from Ray at about 7:00. The match was nothing special but I had never seen Sting or Angle wrestle live (Becca is a lifelong WWE fan and had never seen a Sting match period, which blew my mind).

After the main event JB talked about Angle being inducted in the Hall of Fame and Kurt was cheered to the back. JB told us that for \$30 (or for free to those that bought the VIP pass) your entire group could get a picture with Sting with no limit on the amount of people. For a large group of people that's a great deal. The line took a bit to get through but it was an amazing feeling to walk through the ropes and get inside a ring. The fact that Sting is one of my favorite wrestlers ever made it even better.

The mat is a lot softer than I expected and actually has some give to it. I was surprised at how hard a turnbuckle felt too. I got my picture taken with Sting and was surprised at how tall he was. I'm 6'0 tall and I was looking up at him. As I was leaving I told Sting I had been watching for 25 years and he was the first thing I remembered (Black Scorpion). He said wow that's awesome and said thanks for being a fan.

We were given a copy of our photo as we left and a card telling us how we can get digital copies of them in a few days. That's really efficient for such a short amount of time.



As we were leaving a guy from TNA asked us if we had a good time and seemed very pleased that we enjoyed ourselves. He jokingly asked us to tell people about it on the dirt sheets and smiled when I said I ran a

wrestling website.

Overall, this was VERY fun and probably the most entertaining wrestling show I've been to, which covers a lot of ground. The show felt like it was very personal and focused on making sure the fans have a good time. The \$80 combined for all the autographs, meeting the wrestlers and tickets was more than worth it as we were back home in just over four hours.

We were at a WWE Smackdown show a few months ago and it's a very different feeling. WWE feels like a big spectacle and was certainly fun and affordable (tickets were the same price and about the same distance from the ring) but the star power was nothing compared to this show. The biggest stars I saw at the WWE show were Orton, Sheamus and Del Rio. Tonight I saw Angle, Sting and Jeff Hardy which pretty much crushes the WWE roster.

The other main difference is how accessible things were tonight. At the WWE show it felt like there was a huge divide between the fans and the wrestlers. Tonight they made us feel welcome (not to say WWE didn't) and like we were in a much more intimate setting. The vibe is completely different here too. With WWE it felt like you were getting an entertainment show whereas tonight was about kicking back and enjoying two and a half hours of wrestling. There were no Twitter polls, promos to hype up matches, or pointless filler matches. Tonight was entertaining, fast paced, and above all else: FUN.

If you ever have the chance to go to a TNA show, make sure you take the opportunity and spring for the VIP package. The show feels so less polished (in a good way) than a WWE show and doesn't walk you through everything. The WWE show had a better quality to the matches (Barrett vs.

Del Rio and Sheamus/Orton vs Shield) but tonight was so basic (one heel wins in six matches) and focused on the fans that it was a blast.

If Impact was like this every week, WWE would be in trouble. It made Becca want to watch Impact for the first time in years which is the right idea for these shows. The difference between the live events and Impact (read as no Hogan and WAY less stupid stuff) is remarkable and the show was definitely worth the time and money. Check them out if you get the chance and want a completely different wrestling experience from a WWE show.