

Ring of Honor Final Battle 2015: We'll Call It A Success

Final Battle 2015

Date: December 18, 2015

Location: 2300 Arena, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Mr. Wrestling III

As the name suggests, this is the final major show of the year for Ring of Honor as well as the biggest show of the year. The main event is a dream match with Ring of Honor World Champion Jay Lethal defending against AJ Styles in a match that hasn't been the best promoted. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Cheeseburger vs. Bob Evans

This is the blowoff to a feud that has gone on far too long for a low level team that split up. Evans, with new student Tim Hughes in his corner, is a grizzled veteran and Cheeseburger is the size of a fourteen year old on a growth spurt. During the entrances, Kelly asks why Mr. Wrestling III sounds EXACTLY like Steve Corino. I'm sure you get the joke here.

Cheeseburger has to fight off Hughes to start and low bridges Evans out to the floor. An Asai moonsault takes out both villains but we get some old school distractions so Hughes can cheap shot Cheeseburger. Evans makes it even worse by putting on Cheeseburger's hat. That's like, evil man. Back in and Evans steps on Cheeseburger's broken hand (which Evans threatened to saw off) as the slow beating continues.

Cheeseburger fights back again as Wrestling III makes sandwich puns. A springboard knee to the head drops Evans for two but the much bigger Bob runs him over. Evans trips going up top and Cheeseburger hits two straight palm strikes, the second of which puts Evans on the middle rope. A middle rope DDT gives Cheeseburger the kind of lame pin to end the feud.

Rating: D+. This is another feud where it needed to end a lot sooner than it did. It's the same story they've had for months now and I don't know why I needed to see another match between the two of them with Cheeseburger fighting from behind and getting the big underdog victory. At least it didn't eat up a lot of TV time along the way though and they kept this before the pay per view here.

The opening video is kept simple as they just look at the matches on the card.

Briscoe Brothers vs. All Night Express vs. Young Bucks

For the #1 contendership and one fall to a finish. The Express beat the Briscoes and got cheated out of a win over the Bucks. The Briscoes are here because they're the best tag team in ROH history. Mark Briscoe and Nick Jackson get things going and we get an early SUCK IT because that's what the Bucks do. As the Spanish commentary bleeds in a bit, Jay comes in to pound on Nick as Wrestling III goes on the shortest limb ever to suggest that Jay is the most decorated wrestler in ROH history.

Titus tags himself in and the fans are not happy with the Bucks being on the apron. Jay elbows Titus out of the corner but eats a superkick from Matt, meaning it's time for a mini superkick party. The Bucks are cleared from the ring and it's time for Titus vs. Mark. That doesn't last long as Mark takes him to the floor for a Blockbuster off the apron, only to have King dive on Mark. Jay does the same to King and Titus eats a superkick.

Both Bucks hit 450's for two on Titus and it's time for everyone to kick each other a bunch of times. For instance, Jay takes Nick down with a neckbreaker but eats a superkick from Matt. Of course the fans eat this up while also likely booing John Cena for only having five moves. The Briscoes take over on King with some good old fashioned double teaming. A Doomsday Device to King is broken up but the Bucks are right there with double superkicks to King and both Briscoes.

The Meltzer Driver gets two on Jay (Wrestling III: "FIVE STARS! FIVE STARS! FIVE STARS! Uncle Dave must be smiling at home!") but More Bang for Your Buck is broken up. Mark loads Titus up for a superplex but King kicks him in the head, setting up a super One Night Stand (a

powerbomb/Blockbuster combo) to pin Mark and give the Express the title shot. The fans are NOT happy with the result.

Rating: B-. Well they had the right idea here and the match was fun, though I really do not care for the Young Bucks. The idea is there but it's just not something I ever need to see again. That being said, this was a really solid choice for an opener as the fans are on fire and the match was hot enough to get the show off on the right foot. Good stuff here, though far more entertaining than quality.

We recap Silas Young vs. Dalton Castle, which is a huge culture clash. Castle is much more flamboyant and had possession of his Boys. Young wanted those Boys to become men and won them in a match a few weeks back. Tonight is the final battle (oh I think I get it now) between the two, even though the Boys seem to have chosen to stay with Young.

Silas Young vs. Dalton Castle

Young has the Boys with him but is quickly taken down with some amateur stuff. This sets up a chase but the Boys block Castle from going after their new....boss? Back in and Young sends him hard into the corner and drops Castle face first onto the buckle. Kelly thinks Castle is just a step off here, meaning the Boys are worth a half step each. A low blow make things even worse for Castle but the fans are too busy telling Young that he sucks to notice what's going on.

We hit the chinlock (now that's something you don't see too often in ROH) for a bit before Dalton pops back up with a German suplex to get a breather. A half butterfly suplex gets two on Young and it's time to pull back the floor mats. The Boys don't seem to mind and watch the two of them slug it out on the apron.

Young sends him to another part of the apron and spears Castle through the corner and out to the floor. They're doing a good job here of having Silas doing the speed wrestling and amateur stuff while Young is just doing pure power brawling. Castle catches a charge and sends him out to the apron, followed by a nice deadlift German from the apron for two.

Young backflips out of the corner but gets speared right back in as

they've swapped styles. A slugout goes to Young but he dives into a release belly to belly throw. The Boys try to break up another German and one gets pulled in, only to eat a right hand from Castle. The distraught Dalton walks into Misery to give Young the pin.

Rating: C+. I still like the story they're going with here but I'm not sure what the point here was in having Young win again. You would think the play here would be to have Castle get his revenge, perhaps with the Boys helping out, though it would kind of make their recent show of loyalty to Young seem a bit questionable.

Post match Young stomps on Castle and demands that he admit Young is a real man. Castle won't say anything so Young stomps him down even more. Silas gives the Boys some chairs and Castle finally admits that Silas is a man. A very foolish man however as those are Dalton's boys, who beat Young down with the chairs. Castle adds a Bang-a-Rang and sits on the Boys, who are now free, meaning stipulations mean nothing in ROH. There better be a Boys Are Back In Town reference some point soon.

We recap Moose vs. Michael Elgin which is all about who is the better monster. Both of them want a shot at Jay Lethal's World Title so let's have them beat on each other until one can't get up.

Moose vs. Michael Elgin

Winner might be #1 contender but it doesn't seem to be official. Moose comes out in a football helmet and shoulder pads to play up his NFL career. They shake hands to start before shoulders don't move either guy anywhere. The next set of shoulders put both guys down and they slowly slug it out with Elgin getting the better of it, setting up a delayed vertical suplex.

Elgin barely looked strained there but Moose pops right up, mainly because it's just a suplex. Back up and Elgin beats him to the punch, only to walk into a dropkick from the big man. They head outside with Moose's spear hitting the barricade, allowing Elgin to hit a cannonball off the apron. Back in and a top rope shoulder (always cool) gets two for Mike as the announcers try to figure out if Elgin vs. Lethal, already signed for January 4 in Tokyo, will be a title match if Elgin wins here.

So much for leaving any doubt about the ending.

Moose sends him flying off a fallaway slam, only to eat an enziguri. By eat I mean take because you don't eat with the back of your head of course. Some rolling Germans have Moose in trouble but he puts Elgin on the top for another impressive dropkick. That means it's time for a top rope plancha from Moose which only kind of connects but it still looked good. A sitout powerbomb gets two for Moose as they're trading bombs here.

They head to the apron with Elgin's Death Valley Driver looking to set up a corkscrew senton (not great looking but Elgin is no high flier) for two. Moose hammers away but charges into a double pop up powerbomb (That's not normal. Like at all.), followed by the Elgin Bomb for a very close two.

Elgin is stunned, allowing Moose to hit a spear out of nowhere for a near fall of his own, sending Stokely into hysterics on the floor. That Spanish commentary bleeds in again as Moose gets all fired up, only to miss a charge in the corner. A Burning Hammer of all things (reverse Death Valley Driver with a shout of I'M COMING FOR YOU LETHAL) finally puts Moose away.

Rating: C+. Take two monsters and let them beat on each other for about ten minutes. It's a formula that's worked forever and it's going to keep working, even in a smark promotion like Ring of Honor. Elgin winning was obvious as Moose still needs a lot of seasoning, but at least it was a fun match while it lasted. Good stuff, though it never hit that big power match level that these things are capable of hitting.

They shake hands again post match.

We recap Kyle O'Reilly vs. Adam Cole. They used to be partners in Future Shock and started to put the team back together until Cole turned on him at All-Star Extravaganza. Cole was ticked off about O'Reilly being dubbed a future star after Cole already held the ROH World Title. This caused Cole to start ruining O'Reilly's life and career, setting up a showdown here. The recap promos do little to disprove the fact that Cole is so far ahead of O'Reilly on the mic.

Adam Cole vs. Kyle O'Reilly

They're all over each other to start with Kyle trying for a triangle choke, only to settle for kicking Cole in the face instead. Cole is knocked outside and tries a chair but Kyle dropkicks him off the apron to knock it away. Back in and Kyle starts in on the arm before grabbing a quickly broken choke. O'Reilly tries to get a bit too fancy though and gets dropkicked out to the floor, meaning it's time for Adam to go after the leg.

Kyle doesn't seem to mind as he fires off knees, only to get taken down by the leg again. A leg lock doesn't do much so Kyle wins a slugout but Cole takes him down into a half crab. With the holds not working, Cole blasts him in the head with a running knee instead. Kyle gets in a knee to the face of his own but it slows him down. Of course he's able to snap off a series of strikes with a leg sweep before holding his knee again.

Kyle slaps him in the face but Cole flips him off, earning himself a cross armbreaker. Cole counters with a stomp to the face as the fans think this is wrestling. Not quite but you don't argue with Philadelphia fans. They trade kicks until Kyle grabs a suplex for two to put both guys down again. Kyle's Kimura is countered into a fireman's carry neckbreaker to give Cole a breather.

Cole kicks the knee out and enziguris Kyle out to the floor, only to get caught in a guillotine. That's countered into a suplex neckbreaker to give Cole two back inside. With nothing else working, it's time to hit the Figure Four on Kyle's bad knee. They strike it off again with a bunch of Japanese kicks from Kyle, who walks into a superkick. Kyle bounces off the ropes ala Ambrose, only to walk into another superkick ala half the WWE roster.

O'Reilly gets in a lariat off the second rebound and grabs the armbreaker, sending Cole into the ropes. Fans: "THIS IS AWESOME!" I just want to shake these people hard and scream at them about how they don't get it. Cole hits another superkick so Kyle grabs a triangle choke, only to have Cole fall forward and put his feet on the ropes for a pin.

Rating: B+. HORRENDOUS selling issues aside ("BUT IT'S FIGHTING SPIRIT!")

No, it's stupid. You can call it whatever you want but it's code for they aren't selling.), this was a very well told story with Kyle being so obsessed with the submissions and making Cole tap out that he forgot you could win by pinfall, giving Cole an opening to win. All the striking was a bit more acceptable here as they would do other stuff in between, but that section where Kyle got kicked in the face over and over and then just did a clothesline followed by another hold was horrible.

Kyle destroys Cole's arm with a cross armbreaker post match.

Quick recap of Addiction/Chris Sabin vs. ACH/Matt Sydal/Alex Shelley, which is simply a way to give us Sabin vs. Shelley without giving us Sabin vs. Shelley.

Chris Sabin/Addiction vs. ACH/Matt Sydal/Alex Shelley

Prince Nana comes out for commentary for no apparent reason. Daniels and Shelley get things going with Alex taking him down by the arm. It's off to Sydal with a slingshot dropkick but Kazarian gets in a cheap shot and comes in to take over. That goes nowhere so it's off to ACH as the announcers discuss Dragon Ball Z. Sabin comes in and things speed up without much contact as it only can in ROH.

We get the big showdown with Shelley but you know it's not happening that fast, meaning it's off to Kazarian instead. ACH comes in for an awkward run into a drop toehold before Sydal comes back in for a standing moonsault. Everything breaks down (shocking) and Sabin cleans house with some running kicks/knees to the face. Daniels comes in with a running neckbreaker to Sydal as things settle down.

The heels all hit legdrops with Kazarian adding a spinning springboard to his. Addiction breaks up a hot tag attempt and it's a triple dropkick for two on Sydal. Matt finally sends him into the corner and makes the tag off to Shelley for some much needed house cleaning. A dragon screw leg whip puts Daniels down and it's off to ACH as this really isn't clicking so far. Everything breaks down and ACH totally botches what looked to be a headscissors around the post.

Daniels can't hit the BME and it's back to Sydal for his jumping strikes.

The good guys try a triple....something on Daniels that doesn't quite work, just like Matt's shooting star as Daniels gets his knees up. Daniels starts taking down all of the good guys until ACH sends him into Sabin. The Midnight Star (450) and the shooting star press from Sydal are enough for the pin on Chris.

Rating: D+. Did you know these guys are indy wrestlers? I didn't know if you knew it from the fifteen minute indy style match they just worked but they're indy wrestlers. Sabin vs. Shelley never happened and after this I really don't need to see it happen. Not a good match here and it really needed five minutes cut out. I'm not a fan of this style and it really didn't do anything for me here.

We get a promo from Bobby Fish which aired on TV last week. Roderick Strong calls himself Mr. ROH but Fish is the man that takes everyone to the limit. Tonight he's taking Strong past the limit and taking the title.

TV Title: Bobby Fish vs. Roderick Strong

Roderick is defending. They hit the mat to start with Fish getting the better of it as the fans are mostly split. Bobby goes for the arm and tries the leg, sending Strong bailing for the ropes. A few minutes in and Kelly mentions that Fish pinned Strong back in September. Strong avoids a plancha to the floor and drops Fish onto the barricade to take over for the first time.

Back in and a quick suplex gets two for the champ and a belly to back suplex into a backbreaker (not bad) has Fish in even more trouble. Strong comes back with a running elbow and a high collar suplex into the corner ala Sami Zayn. We hit the rear naked choke (rapidly becoming too popular) but Strong is quickly in the ropes and firing off the running strikes. Fish gets sent to the apron and grabs a dragon screw leg whip to take over again, meaning it's time to trade forearms. Back in and Strong hits a quick enziguri and a middle rope backbreaker for two.

They head back up top with Strong pulling him down into a super falcon's arrow for two more. This has been trading big moves for a while now and it's starting to work more and more. Strong tries the running knee but

gets caught in a leg bar. Roderick taps out where the referee can't see it so Fish releases the hold, only to walk into the jumping knee to the head to give Strong the pin.

Rating: B-. While the six man needed to lose five minutes, this could have used a few more minutes. It felt like they were leading somewhere with the trading of spots but instead they went with an oddly placed Undertaker vs. Lesnar from Summerslam finish. It's clear that they're turning Strong heel with the finish, which makes me wonder who is supposed to be the top face at this point. Not a great match or anything but at least it was entertaining and told most of a good story.

Here are Veda Scott and Cedric Alexander (with a nice watch) to ignore the fans telling them to shut up and brag about a settlement with Ring of Honor over their recent lawsuit. This just ate up time.

Tag Team Titles: War Machine vs. Kingdom

Kingdom is defending here and there's no real story. War Machine came out one day and told Taven and Bennett that they wanted the belts. Speaking of the belts, the Kingdom blasts War Machine with the titles before the bell and Taven dives onto Rowe. That's not it though as the champs hit a Hail Mary (spike piledriver) onto the floor. The bell finally rings as Rowe is thrown inside for two.

Unfortunately Taven comes up limping and you can tell something is very wrong. Hanson gets sent back first into the apron and the champs are still able to double team Rowe for two back inside. Taven's knee gives out on the floor so Rowe powerbombs Bennett up against the barricade. Back in and Fallout gives War Machine the titles in just over three minutes. I'm not going to rate this as it was clearly cut WAY short due to the injury and it wouldn't be fair to grade a match where they had to go home that fast.

Mr. Wrestling III leaves commentary and here's BJ Whitmer (not supposed to be here) to accuse Wrestling III of being Steve Corino. Security quickly gets rid of him.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Jay Lethal, which is really just to see who is

better. It feels like a way to put Lethal over as they've barely done any interacting in the weeks building up to this.

Nigel McGuinness and Jerry Lynn join commentary.

Ring of Honor World Title: AJ Styles vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal is defending and has Truth Martini/Taeler Hendrix with him. Styles, who has a bad back coming in, is part of the Bullet Club but comes out alone. We get some big match intros and we're ready to go. Feeling out process to start as they seem to have a lot of time to work with. AJ gets the better of a technical sequence and Lethal bails out to the floor. Back in and AJ grabs a headlock as the announcers debate whether Elgin vs. Lethal will be for the title or not.

We get the drop down into the dropkick from Styles but Lethal hiptosses him down for a basement dropkick of his own. It's time for some big chops until Lethal gets caught in the Calf Cutter, sending him straight to the ropes. AJ has to avoid a book shot from Martini and gets dropped onto the apron, drawing a TRUTH MARTINI chant.

Lethal gets smart by sending him back first into the barricade and the pace slows down. We hit a camel clutch as the fans swear at someone over something. A suplex into the corner (also becoming too popular lately) rocks Styles' back for two more and Lethal grabs the world's least convincing bearhug. Shockingly enough, Jay Lethal holding a bearhug doesn't last long as AJ comes back with forearms and clotheslines, followed by a suplex into the corner of his own.

The springboard forearm is caught in the Lethal Combination for two and the champ takes over again. They fight over a suplex until AJ takes him over for a neckbreaker. I've always liked that move. Styles can't get the Clash so Lethal throws him into the air and pulls him down into a neckbreaker for two of his own.

Lethal gets tired of this wrestling stuff and throws AJ over the barricade and into the crowd. Ever the genius, Lethal tries a suicide dive with AJ still behind the barricade. AJ, also not that bright, tries the forearm off the barricade but really just collides with Lethal

instead. Naturally the fans think it's awesome because you could put an ROH label on Lord Littlebrook vs. Little Beaver and they would declare it wrestling.

Back in and Jay grabs a Koji Clutch, only to get countered into the Calf Cutter, sending Jay into the ropes again. A big Lethal Injection out of the corner gets two but AJ snaps off a Pele, followed by the Bloody Sunday. Styles loads up something else but gets thrown over the top and through a table, absolutely destroying it in the crash. AJ dives in at nineteen and the Lethal Injection gets two (of course). Instead, Lethal uses Jerry Lynn's cradle piledriver (due to Jerry saying AJ would win) to set up the second Lethal Injection to retain.

Rating: B+. This wasn't a masterpiece or even a classic but it was a pay per view quality main event. Lethal pinning Styles clean was a good way to make Lethal look great as AJ has been considered one of the best in the world for a long time now. I'm not sure how long Jay holds the title but if they want to pull the trigger on something, giving it back to Elgin in Tokyo would be rather smart.

Lethal and company pose to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Good show but not great. The midcard stuff really didn't work well at times and it made the show feel like it was dragging more than once. A lot of the talents are having contract issues which changed up a bunch of the results but the show still worked well enough. I liked the show and it flew by so we'll call it a success after several weeks of good TV which built the show up well enough but not perfectly.

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