

ROH Final Battle 2016: TV Not Required

Final Battle 2016

Date: December 2, 2016

Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Steve Corino, Kevin Kelly

This has been a fairly big request so I might as well get it out of the way before it's way too late. Final Battle is the biggest Ring of Honor show of the year and this edition is headlined by Adam Cole defending the ROH World Title against Kyle O'Reilly. The card isn't the strongest in the world but there's always potential. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Story Time with Adam Cole, who has a story about two knights. One of them went on to become the King but everyone was jealous of him. The King had all the friends he needed and all the other knight had was a shot at the throne, which he failed. Then he failed again and again until Kyle O'Reilly is out of shots. Cole drops the story and promises that tonight, Kyle fails all over again.

Opening sequence.

The announcers run down the card (as in the one you already paid for) which now includes a triple threat instead of a fourway as Bobby Fish's mother passed away, forcing him out of the match.

Rebellion vs. Motor City Machine Guns/Donovan Dijak

The Guns are still in search of a permanent partner because trios are suddenly awesome. The Rebellion is the former Cabinet (Caprice Coleman/Kenny King/Rhett Titus) because Rebellion might actually be an even weaker name. To really show how rebellious King is, he has an upside down ROH logo on his trunks. Sabin and King run the ropes a bit to start with a grand total of nothing happen. Gotta love that non-offense from these rebels.

A quick triple team puts Dijak down and it's Titus, billed as the BIG DAWG with a similar ROH logo on the trunks, getting triple

teamed right back. Shelley does a little Ric Flair strut and helps hold Titus up for a middle rope splash from Dijak. A good right hand (Corino: "PS!") drops Sabin though and it's time for the Rebellion (and their dastardly trunks to take over. Coleman, the true rebel here due to his slacks, gets in a few stomps of his own.

More triple teaming ensues until Sabin gets in a tornado DDT. That means Dijak gets to clean house with a top rope chokebreaker (close enough at least) getting two on Titus. The fans are WAY into Dijak here but the chants are cut off as the Guns start speeding things up. Well as speedy as they can make them at this point in their careers.

Dijak actually busts out a springboard flip dive to make my eyes pop open. Feast Your Eyes sends Titus into a powerbomb for two with Coleman and King diving in for the save. Another powerbomb puts King down but Skull and Bones are broken up. The Sky Splitter sets up the Big Dawg (frog) splash to put Sabin away at 12:27.

Rating: C+. Now this is a good way to start a show: with a mostly meaningless six man tag featuring a bunch of flying around and fast paced offense that gets the crowd going early on. Unfortunately that's about it for the good stuff as the Rebellion might be the least interesting idea for a gimmick this year. It's one of those cliched names that you throw out there on a tiny indy show, not the biggest show of the year for one of the biggest promotions in the country.

We recap Silas Young vs. Jushin Thunder Liger. Young got annoyed at a fan dressing up like Liger so he wanted to beat up the inspiration for never showing his face like a coward.

Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Silas Young

Young has Beer City Bruiser with him. A cheap shot puts Liger trouble but the threat of a surfboard sends Silas bailing to the floor. Back in and we hit the surfboard until Silas grabs the referee for the break. A neckbreaker puts Liger down and the Bruiser offers a cheap shot (it's not like he's going to do much else) to keep Silas in control. Young actually goes for the mask because he really is that evil.

Liger gets caught in a backbreaker for two but manages to get in a double clothesline for a breather. It's too early for the Liger Bomb though and a big neckbreaker gets two for Young. That means it's

time for a shot of beer, which is spat on Liger's mask. It's enough to make Liger hit a brainbuster but a top rope splash hits knees. Misery puts Liger away at 11:04.

Rating: C-. Nothing to see here but above all else the right person won. Liger is still an attraction and a win over him seems to mean something, which is exactly what someone like Silas needs. It's nothing great but it did its job well enough. I'm still not sure where they're going with Young but we've waiting on it for a long time.

We recap Colt Cabana vs. Dalton Castle, which is your standard short term tag team breakup feud with Cabana playing heel.

Colt Cabana vs. Dalton Castle

You can tell Colt has turned as his music into something much slower with rap lyrics. Castle comes out in a chariot pulled by the Boys. Dalton immediately poses on the middle rope with his legs crossed like a gentleman. A quick takedown puts Colt on the mat and he bails to the floor, allowing Castle to do his strut after faking Cabana out on a suicide dive. The Boys are thrown in so Castle uses them as stepping stones to set up a dropkick. Now that shows some thinking out there.

Another trip to the mat goes badly for Cabana but he finally pulls Dalton out of the corner to take over. A quick Billy Goat's Curse sends Castle diving for the ropes, which looked quite a bit like a tap. Dalton grabs a hurricanrana before sidestepping a Lionsault press. Colt pops up but can't hit the Chicago Skyline. He can however reverse the Bang A Rang into a rollup for two but Dalton grabs the Bang A Rang for the pin at 10:22.

Rating: C. Castle is another guy who could be something special if he's given the right kind of push. However, his character is one of those kind that has a firm ceiling above its head because of the nature of the persona. He's getting better in the ring though and those eyes being all buggy make things even better.

Jay Lethal gives a great promo about how he won't be remembered if he doesn't do something memorable. Tonight he's going to show why he's the best wrestler in the world, like he's been for years.

Cody vs. Jay Lethal

Brandi Rhodes gets in a chuckle worthy line with "Where we're going

we don't need Rhodes." Lethal has a vest containing his wish list, which include Cody. We're not quite ready to go yet though as the Addiction comes out to interrupt. They're cool with the night off after what they went through at Ladder War. Daniels talks about growing up watching Dusty Rhodes and how important it is to have wrestlers like Cody on the roster. Addiction will be sitting in on commentary.

Feeling out process to start as they hit the mat early on. A hiptoss exchange goes fine until Lethal gets in a dropkick for the first major offense. Cody comes right back with a very delayed gordbuster and starts in on the arm. Addiction keeps putting over the idea of Cody having experience in big matches and not buckling under the pressure.

A skinning of the cat is broken up by Jay dropkicking Cody in the face (that's a new one) to send him outside. That means three straight suicide dives with Cody being ready for the third and breaking it up with a Disaster Kick. Back in and another Disaster Kick grazes Jay's hands but he backflips on the impact anyway. Eh it wouldn't be Ring of Honor if there wasn't an unnecessary flip.

Lethal comes back with a Crossface but Cody rolls into a modified Indian Deathlock of all things. After a rope is grabbed, Cody turns him inside out again with a clothesline and the frustration sets in on the kickout. The moonsault press misses, which Kevin calls Cody's first mistake. Oh I'm sure I could find a few. Jay starts striking him in the face but we've got a ref bump, allowing Cody to kick Jay low for the surprise heel turn. Cross Rhodes puts Lethal away at 13:12.

Rating: B-. Best match of the night so far but it still wasn't great. Turning Cody heel is certainly interesting though as you don't often send in someone like Cody and then have them do anything other than be a short term conquering hero. A win over Lethal is still a big deal, even though Jay has taken a few steps down from where he was recently. Good enough match too.

Post match Cody mocks the Code of Honor and flips Lethal off. Addiction chases him away while Corino jumps back in on commentary to say "he was right all along." Rhodes shoves Corino down but Steve keeps his cool.

Long recap of the Six Man Tag Team Title tournament. Lio Rush is

replacing ACH, who has left the promotion.

Six Man Tag Team Titles: Kingdom vs. Kushida/Jay White/Lio Rush

The titles are vacant coming in and I still have no idea which one is TK O’Ryan and which is Vinny Marsegila. Before the bell, Corino says the Father (likely meaning Kevin Sullivan) said the evil was coming and that’s clearly Cody. Things start very fast with Rush hitting a standing C4 and frog splash for a pretty hot two.

After a break on the floor, White takes O’Ryan down until it’s off to Kushida for a dropkick to the head. Rush comes in for some YES Kicks but Taven sneaks in for a DDT to take over. O’Ryan adds a spear for two as things settle down into your normal formula. The first hot tag brings in Kushida for the Hoverboard Lock but O’Ryan is quickly in the ropes.

The announcers are nice enough to start explaining why we should care about the Kingdom as Kushida scores with a double Tajiri handspring elbow. Everything breaks down and White gets two off a missile dropkick. To really pick things up a bit, White gets caught in a half crab from the top rope, only to have Kushida put Vinny in the Hoverboard Lock on the top for the save.

A superplex breaks the submissions which don’t count because they’re in the ropes and it’s time for Rush to get to show off because ROH LOVES that guy. Kushida gets in a big dive to take all of the Kingdom down, only to have Taven dive onto the even bigger pile. Back in and Rush has Vinny beaten so TK dives off the top to take out the referee. Rush goes crazy with his strikes but the triple powerbomb crushes Lio to give the Kingdom the belts at 15:22.

Rating: C+. This is a good example of just throwing titles out there and not bothering to put anything important behind them. There’s no reason to care about Six Man Tag Team Titles when there were barely any trios in the first place. It comes off like someone else did something so now we’ve got Trios Titles. That doesn’t mean it works and the match wasn’t great either, making this the finals of one heck of a waste of time, especially with the winners being a reincarnated stable that is missing all the parts that made it work in the first place.

We recap the rapidly changing TV Title picture. Will Ospreay took the title from Bobby Fish, only to lose it two days later to Marty Scurll. Dragon Lee is involved here as well because we need to bring

in other people from around the world whether they're interesting or not. Fish is out of the match due to a death in the family earlier in the day.

TV Title: Will Ospreay vs. Dragon Lee vs. Marty Scurll

Scurll, dubbed the Villain (I can work with this) is defending. As you might expect, everything starts fast with all three doing a bunch of flips without making any real contact. Will and Lee chop it out before all three wind up on the floor, only to have Lee hit a big flip dive. Back in and Will's standing shooting star gets two on Lee, starting a British double team.

With Lee dispatched, Ospreay and Scurll start slugging it out until Marty gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Cue Lee for the Alberto Del Rio top rope double stomp and a near fall. A running hurricanrana pulls Ospreay off the apron and down to the floor but Will pops back up for a big running flip dive of his own.

A very fast series of dives has Scurll in trouble but he catches a final dive in his crossface chickenwing. Lee dives in for the save and it's time for the circle chop fest. Ospreay does a double Tajiri handspring spinning kick to the face. Well that works. Scurll gets tired of this nonsense and BREAKS LEE'S FINGER, setting up the chickenwing to retain the title at 11:04.

Rating: B+. See, now this is something I can get behind. They didn't bother trying with anything other than fast paced action and that's what we got. I was having flashbacks to the Cruiserweight Classic here as it was all about speed and nonstop action, which is why you bring people like these three in. It might not have been the highest quality match but it was a lot of fun and highly entertaining.

We recap the Tag Team Title match, which is just about the Briscoes wanting their ninth title reign.

Tag Team Titles: Briscoe Brothers vs. Young Bucks

The Bucks are defending. Mark and Nick get things going but it's quickly off to Jay (now with hair, making it easier to tell them apart) for an elbow. That goes nowhere so it's a big staredown. The double superkicks are countered with the Bucks being sent to the floor, only to come back in for the slingshot dropkicks. A flip dive takes the challengers down and even more dives have them reeling.

The Briscoes are a bit more old school though and will have none of

this being on defense thing, meaning a big double clothesline takes the Bucks down. Jay drops a BANG BANG Elbow off the apron because he's not that original. We settle down to the Bucks in trouble because ROH is a weird company where the heels are faces and the faces are weaker faces because the heels are cool heels in Japan, which makes them faces by default.

Nick gets up and sends Jay outside for a tornado DDT off the apron, only to have the Briscoes come back in for a double superkick of their own. Unfortunately that means the Bucks start with their own superkicks and Corino SHOUTS THE MOVE'S NAME A LOT. Eh I'll still take it over Joey Styles.

The draped over the ropes Swanton to Jay sets up More Bang for Your Buck on Mark, sending the fans even further into Buck-Love. Jay comes back in with a superkick of his own and the Jay Driller sets up the Froggy Bow for a very close two on Matt. A springboard Doomsday Device gets the same and the Briscoes can't believe it.

That's a bit too much selling for the Bucks though and it's Nick cleaning house with a bunch of strikes because he can beat up both Briscoes on his own. The Meltzer Driver gets two on Mark and then, I kid you not, TWENTY EIGHT SUPERKICKS IN A ROW give the Bucks a double pin to retain the titles at 16:08.

Rating: B. I know the Bucks are annoying but they're still two of the best high fliers going right now. The superkicks get really, really annoying at times (albeit nowhere near as bad as the "we're cool heels like the NWO" schtick) but at least you get some good matches out of them. The Briscoes will be fine when they do whatever is up next for them and that's been the case for years.

The lights go out....AND WE'VE GOT BROKEN MATT HARDY! They'll be coming to ROH soon (probably around Wrestlemania season) to make the Bucks and the Briscoes obsolete. The fans are WAY into the DELETE chant. The Bucks look stunned.

We recap Kyle O'Reilly vs. Adam Cole in a video that aired on ROH TV. The idea is they've spent years associated in some way and Cole is obsessed with keeping the title away from Kyle at all costs.

ROH World Title: Adam Cole vs. Kyle O'Reilly

Cole is defending and this is now anything goes as per Kyle's request to not have to be held responsible for his actions. Kyle

wins an early slugout and gets the armbreaker over the top rope. It's not clear why he lets it go but Cole kicks him in the head for his general stupidity. Back in and Kyle kicks away before getting shoved off the top to give the champ control.

Even more kicks have Cole reeling but he stops a dive with a belt shot. That's how a heel should use the weapons and it even draws blood from Kyle's forehead. Kyle can't stand up due to the blood loss so Cole puts a trashcan over him for a superkick. O'Reilly starts no selling chair shots (Seriously?) and suplexes Cole onto an open chair for....well very little actually.

Instead he takes Cole outside again and dropkicks a trashcan into Cole's chest for a big crash. It's table time and, after fighting it off for a bit, Cole gets belly to back superplexed through the table for the big crash. That's not enough for Kyle so he grabs a guillotine choke on the apron and kind of DDT's Cole off the apron and through a second table.

Kyle looks under the ring (where they keep all those freaking streamers) and finds a chain for a callback to their match in Dallas. Cole (busted as well) gets in a low blow for two and it's time for thumbtacks. The triangle choke has Kyle in control so Cole powerbombs him onto the tacks for the break. O'Reilly one ups him with a BRAINBUSTER ONTO THE TACKS, followed laying down on those tacks while locking in the cross armbreaker for the submission and the title (announced after a few seconds for some reason) at 19:14.

Rating: B+. I wanted to see more of this and that's a good thing. It felt like the needed a few more minutes to really flesh it out but Kyle laying in the tacks after dropping Cole onto them made it feel like he really just wanted to beat him no matter what. Cole felt like a jerk throughout but he just didn't have heart to keep up with Kyle, which is wrestling in a nutshell. It's not a classic but it told a story, albeit one that should have had its trigger pulled a long time ago. Maybe it's just that I'm not a huge fan of this feud but I never got into the big emotional impact here.

O'Reilly celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. The first half of the show isn't as strong as the second but it's still more than good enough to set up the main events. Nothing really stands out above everything else but nothing was bad and the last three matches range from good to very good.

This show's problem is the lack of a strong build, as nothing on here really feels like it's something worth seeing. That makes it a rare instance where it's better to watch the show with no TV build as the pay per view is actually very strong and better than most stuff ROH puts out.

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