

Ring of Honor 15th Anniversary Show: You Can't Rely on This Forever

15th Anniversary Show

Date: March 10, 2017

Location: Sam's Town Live Casino, Sunrise Manor, Nevada

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Kevin Kelly, Colt Cabana

This was a recent request and for once I'm actually trying to get some of those knocked off. Ring of Honor has been around for a long time and the fact that they've made it this far is really quite impressive. Since it's a major milestone show, the main event is an ROH legend in Christopher Daniels trying to win the ROH World Title for the first time. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at some of the bigger names in the company's history (the only logical way to go) before switching up to Daniels talking about starting wrestling in 1993 and getting here. Champion Adam Cole says 1993 was important for him too as he learned to color. This is your classic young punk vs. veteran and there's nothing wrong with that. It worked for Raven vs. Terry Funk and it can work well here. As a final note, Daniels' best friend Kazarian joined the Bullet Club, which sounds rather swervish.

Jay White vs. Caprice Coleman

Great. We're starting with a bonus match and a bonus REBELLION match on top of that. This show isn't looking very promising. Ian: "Collar and elbow tieup to start here." Colt: "Great call Ian!" They fight over wristlocks and armdrags to start with King getting the better of it and driving some knees into the back.

White gets in a few Tomoaki Honma spots to pop the crowd (Honma was badly injured and out of action at this point). Since it's just a headbutt, King knocks him to the floor for a flip dive. A chinlock goes nowhere so White gets up and dives on fellow Rebellion member Caprice Coleman.

This proves to be a bad idea (as is almost always the case) as King hits a running dropkick, followed by a bridging capture suplex for

two. White comes back with a Downward Spiral but charges into a spinebuster for no cover. Jay gets dropkicked on the top but shoves King away for a high crossbody. That's rolled through as well with King trying the Royal Flush, only to have White small package him for the pin at 9:52.

Rating: C+. Nice match here with both guys looking good, or at least as the Rebellion is capable of looking. White is one of the many talented people in ROH who can wrestle a solid match but doesn't really have a character, meaning he has a bit of a firm ceiling to how far he can go. The match was a good opener and the ending was exactly what it should have been.

We recap the dissolution of the Addiction with Kazarian joining the Bullet Club.

The Club welcomes their newest member.

Kazarian vs. Hangman Paige vs. Chris Sabin vs. Punisher Martinez vs. Cheeseburger vs. Silas Young

One fall to a finish, tags required, lucha rules and the winner gets a future TV Title shot. We start with Kazarian and Sabin trading probably a dozen one counts off a rollup. They're on the floor in a hurry and that means we hit the parade of dives with the 6'7 Martinez hitting a step up dive of his own to really freak the crowd out (I'm not sure if that's really easy or really hard to do around here).

Kazarian and Page take Martinez down, leaving us with a short lived Bullet Club showdown. Cheeseburger comes in to break it up but gets beaten up by Young, leaving the announcers to make food jokes. Martinez chokes Cheeseburger (Colt: "What a pickle!") but everyone comes back in, allowing Sabin to hit a springboard tornado DDT on Young. Page loads Cheeseburger up for the Rite of Passage on the apron but Martinez breaks it up for no apparent reasons.

Adam spits at him for reasons of general stupidity, earning himself a chokeslam onto the apron. Back inside, Sabin German superplexes Kazarian but gets caught in Young's Misery for two. Cheeseburger escapes the same thing and kicks Silas from the apron. The palm strike drops Young but Kazarian grabs the Ace of Spades (twisting Stunner) for the pin on Cheeseburger at 10:19.

Rating: B-. It was fun but this is one of Ring of Honor's major

problem areas: throwing a bunch of people into a match and thinking that's good enough for a story. Kazarian was the only one in the match that had a real chance of winning (based on the story) so why did four others need to be there? Let Kazarian fight any of them (build someone up so they seem like a real threat to beat him) and tell a better story. Just throwing a bunch of people together feels like the easy way out and while the match was fun, it could have been better.

Jay Lethal and Bobby Fish both say they need to win the match so they can go after the World Title.

Bobby Fish vs. Jay Lethal

The match is billed as a top contenders match which may or may not mean a #1 contenders match. It's pretty early in the show for something that big so I'll assume it's just another one of ROH's ideas that might mean someone gets a title shot on some house show. They hit the mat to start before Fish starts in with the kicks. One big kick puts Lethal on the floor for a second thought on his strategy.

Back in and Lethal scores with a dropkick to send Fish outside. Another dropkick sends him into the barricade but Jay misses the suicide dive and hits the barricade as well. That means a bad arm but Jay gets in a third dropkick to keep control. Fish kicks him hard in the chest a few times though, shrugs off a European uppercut (why yes, we are watching an indy wrestling match) and hits another kick to the chest to drop Lethal.

Jay comes right back with a superkick (make your own jokes) and this time the suicide dive works. They get back inside for the big serious exchange of forearms with Fish driving him into the corner for an ankle lock. That's not the brightest idea so Lethal grabs a cutter but Hail to the King is countered into the heel hook. A quick Lethal Combination sets up Hail to the King, only to have Fish grab another heel hook. Jay reverses into a rollup for the break, followed by the Lethal Injection for the pin at 15:12.

Rating: B. The matches are getting better and this one told a good story with the submission grappler against the natural all around performer who comes up biggest on the grand stages. I had a good time with this match, which isn't the most surprising thing in the world given that I like both guys. Fish is a very solid hand but I

think he's pretty much resigned to the position of making the stars look good. Not the most horrible thing in the world to be sure.

We recap the Six Man Tag Team Title match. The Kingdom have the titles and since Dalton Castle and the Boys are a three man combination, they get a title shot. These belts continue to be one of the worst ideas possible for a company like this but hey, New Japan has them right? Both teams have a quick promo, saying they'll win for the obvious reasons.

Six Man Tag Team Titles: The Kingdom vs. Dalton Castle/The Boys

The Kingdom is defending and Castle is just crazy over, being accompanied to the ring by an army of Boys. Thankfully Cabana is there to insult Castle and the Boys after their long feud. It's a brawl to start and I don't remember hearing a bell. The Boys start fast with double suplexes and the Kingdom bails to the floor for a meeting.

Castle and Marseglia start things off with Dalton wrestling him down and slamming the Boys onto him. Cabana actually knows how to tell the Boys apart and it's #1 being taken to the floor for a beating. Colt: "THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN!" #1 gets slammed back first onto the apron and Marseglia follows up with some running forearms to the head. Since he's a good boss, Castle offers a distraction so the Boys can switch.

Colt is losing his mind as he tries to get the referee's attention but the hot tag brings in Castle anyway. The Bang-a-Rang plants O'Ryan for two so the Boys come in for a double dropkick on Vinny. O'Ryan sends the Boys outside and tries an Asai moonsault....which hits the barricade, giving him a legitimate broken leg. Taven and Marseglia throw #1 back inside for a double powerbomb (Rockstar Supernova, an awesome name) to retain at 7:54. You can tell they were home REALLY fast and that's completely understandable.

Rating: D+. This wasn't any good and would have been boring on a regular TV show, let alone a major pay per view. I can't imagine it would have been much to see even with the regular ending but you can't fault them for ending the match soon because of a broken leg. The titles need to go away in a hurry though because they're just not working.

We recap Marty Scurll vs. Lio Rush for the TV Title. Scurll has been a dominant champion and Rush is his latest challenger, having beaten

him in a non-title 2/3 falls match. Assuming Scurll was champion then, why in the world was a 2/3 falls match non-title?

TV Title: Lio Rush vs. Marty Scurll

Rush is challenging and they're quickly on the mat with a series of headlocks into headscissors. Things speed up a bit with Rush tripping him to the floor for a hurricanrana off the apron. That's fine with the arm flapping Scurll who superkicks him from the apron. Back in and Scurll starts in on the arm, including a stomp to the hand. Rush blocks the finger break though and hits a Tajiri handspring into a body block to take over.

Something like Sister Abigail into a DDT instead of a Downward Spiral gets two on the champ but he sends Rush shoulder first into the post. Rush speeds things up again and sends him outside for a double stomp to the back. Back in and Marty kicks at the legs for a change of pace (with the announcers explaining that he's trying to break Rush down piece by piece and that he can always go back to the arm later).

One heck of a forearm puts Rush outside but he storms back in for a rapid fire exchange of forearms. Rush's Tajiri handspring is pulled into the chickenwing but Rush makes the ropes. Scurll gets two off a piledriver but Rush comes right back with a running C4 (Rush Hour) for the same. With nothing else working, Rush heads outside and grabs the belt (Colt: "You have to win that first.").

Not that it matters as he throws it right back outside and kicks Marty in the head for two. With nothing else working, Rush loads up a chair on the floor. A super Rush Hour is broken up though and Scurll takes him down with a Tower of London (hanging cutter out of the corner). The finger is snapped and Marty chickenwings him to retain at 18:38.

Rating: B. Really solid stuff here as Rush continues to grow on me in ways I never would have expected. Scurll is so much fun to watch though I could go for him doing more villainous things than just saying he's a villain. To be fair though, when the setup for your finisher is breaking a finger, you're quite evil in the first place. Good match here and probably the best thing all night so far.

We look at Bully Ray helping the Briscoes in Manhattan, which is all you're getting for a recap.

Briscoe Brothers/Bully Ray vs. War Machine/Davey Boy Smith Jr.

This was supposed to be Smith/Lance Archer vs. the Briscoes but Archer is injured so this is a replacement match. War Machine and Smith don't get along though so this might not be the most competitive match. It's a brawl to start (of course) with Bully sending Davey into the corner a few times. The Briscoes come in and get suplexed at the same time in quite the power display.

Smith gets slammed down for What's Up with Mark hitting an elbow instead of the headbutt. That means it's time for some tables but War Machine makes a save and takes over on Mark. Kelly tries to explain the backstory with all the New Japan stables and as usual, I need a good sized chart to make sense of all this (please don't explain it to me). A series of stomping sets up Smith's camel clutch and a delayed vertical suplex.

Hansen tries one too many right hands and gets caught in a suplex, allowing the hot tag off to Jay. House is cleaned for a few moments until a pop up powerslam plants Jay for two but a clothesline allows the real hot tag to Bully as everything breaks down. Bully actually goes up top for a high crossbody (!) to take out everyone at once. The Jay Driller into the Froggy Bow sets up a three man 3D to finish Rowe at 11:45.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of fun match that you would expect. They beat each other up for a bit and didn't bother wasting time on anything more than they needed to. Bully is best used as a featured attraction like this as he's a legend who can just come in, do his signature stuff, and go to the finish. The match was fine and entertaining, which is all it needed to be.

Smith and War Machine fight on the floor which I'd assume will be resolved in another promotion in Japan.

We recap the Tag Team Title match. The Young Bucks were the champions and successfully defended at Manhattan Mayhem. Post match the Broken Hardys appeared and won the titles in an impromptu match. Roppongi Vice was already scheduled to challenge in a street fight so we'll just make it a three way.

Tag Team Titles: Roppongi Vice vs. Young Bucks vs. Broken Hardys

Matt and Jeff are defending in a street fight. This is just after the TNA lawsuit, meaning the Hardys can only be kind of Broken

because TNA is annoying and petty because they seem to think they can just throw the Broken gimmick on anyone and it'll work (it won't work because no one else can play the characters like Matt and Jeff). But hey, TNA gets to stand by its principles and if they just happen to look like penny pinching imbeciles, so be it.

Vice is knocked to the floor to start so they bring in some weapons to put the bigger teams down. A springboard dropkick drives a trashcan lid into Jeff's back. The Bucks can't hit a Meltzer Driver but the Hardys come back in to beat up Vice instead. Vice breaks up another Bucks vs. Hardys showdown so Nick powerbombs Romero off the apron and onto the ramp. The Bucks and the Hardys start brawling...and let's hit the replay!

The champs get dropped with superkicks but the Bucks miss the stolen Hardys' top rope shots. It's time for the first ladder because I'm not sure the Hardys know how to work a long match without one. Jeff brings in a trashcan but gets superkicked with Matt taking one as well. A third superkick knocks Jeff off the ropes and into a big pile, only to have Nick get shoved off the ladder into a springboard flip dive onto the same pile.

Nick is right back in with a springboard 450 onto a trashcan onto Trent for two. More Bang for Your Buck is broken up and Jeff's Swanton hits raised knees. With everyone down, Romero grabs a sleeve (as in from a shirt) covered in thumbtacks for a string of clotheslines in the corner. Strong Zero gets two on Nick with Matt making the save. Beretta pours out another bag of tacks but due to wrestling law #1, that means he's sent face first into them, this time via something like a Steiner Bulldog.

The Five Star Driver (or maybe it's the Meltzer Driver or whatever their insider name is for it that the fans cheer for because it makes them feel smart) sends Trent into the tacks, setting up another slugout with the Hardys. The champs get the better of it and bring out a table and a second ladder for various hardcore reasons. Matt and Jeff send the Bucks to the floor and a flip dive (not exactly a Swanton through Trent through the table is enough for the pin to retain at 17:14.

Rating: B+. These matches, along with most Bucks matches, are like junk food: there's no quality to them but they're a lot of fun to watch. I'd rather watch them just do their stuff with the superkicks

and flips than try to have people tell me how great a match it is because they know how to put together better matches than any other team. The match was a fun, violent brawl and that's all it needed to be. It was designed to pop the crowd and I got into a lot of those big spots, though the ending felt a bit flat. Also, well done on putting this together so quickly with the surprise addition of the Hardys.

The Hardys take the Young Bucks' Superkick Titles too.

We recap the World Title match. Christopher Daniels won a tournament designed for older competitors to earn his shot. The idea is Daniels has given his all to the business but has never actually won the World Title. He's put in everything he's had for twenty four years and absolutely cannot lose.

This includes another outstanding promo from Daniels where he breaks into tears, talking about how he just has to win. Daniels has been on fire with the promos lately and I actually want to see him win after really not being a fan for years on end. The other detail is Daniels' best friend Kazarian turning on him to join the Bullet Club to side with champion Adam Cole.

ROH World Title: Adam Cole vs. Christopher Daniels

There are no seconds here. Daniels is challenging and we're ready to go after some Big Match Intros. We actually get a Code of Honor as the announcers talk about Daniels being 0-8-1 in World Title matches. Cole takes him down and makes a face before doing it again and slapping Daniels in the back of the head. The feeling out process/mind games continue as Cole sends him into the ropes for an ADAM COLE BAY BAY!

That earns him a right hand to the jaw so Adam stomps away in the corner. A backdrop sends Cole outside to give Daniels his first major offense nearly five minutes in. That's quickly wrapped up though as a superkick knocks Daniels' head into the post to draw some blood. Thankfully Adam is smart enough to stay on the cut and we hit a chinlock, which should squeeze more blood out of his head.

More kicks to the head have Daniels reeling but one too many poses allows Daniels to get in a Koji Clutch for a big hope spot. Daniels can't follow up though so Cole talks trash about Daniels' wife, which gives us the expected result. We hit the slugout with Daniels getting in an ST0 and a Blue Thunder Bomb for two.

The BME misses though and Adam scores with a superkick for two more. A Shining Wizard sets up the Last Shot for a near fall but Daniels hits him in the face again. Angel's Wings is countered and it's a double clothesline to put both guys down. Cole's Canadian Destroyer is countered but he grabs Angel's Wings on Daniels for two.

As you might expect, Daniels hits a Last Shot of his own for the same, followed by a Styles Clash of all things for a very near fall. Back up and the referee gets superkicked so heeeeere's Kazarian. We nearly get some heel miscommunication but instead Kazarian rips off the Bullet Club shirt to reveal a Daniels shirt. A Rock Bottom into three straight BME's give us a new champion at 21:47.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting to with a great story as Daniels survived until he got one shot, just like he had done for his entire career. The Kazarian stuff was really well done (a bit predictable but still good) and Daniels did everything himself (Kazarian never touched Cole). They nailed the big moment and that's all that mattered here with a good match to make it work even better.

The long celebration with a lot of the locker room coming out ends the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This really was a great show with the worst thing being the Six Man Tag Team Titles and even that was far from bad. They nailed the big ending which is all almost anyone is going to remember from this show and that's the most important thing. However, it also brings up one of ROH's major problems.

Aside from the main event and the Tag Team Titles to a lesser degree, almost nothing on here feels like it has a story that has either been thoroughly explained or even exists at all. I watch every episode of ROH TV and I couldn't begin to tell you where a lot of these matches came from. Yeah Rush beat Scurll in a 2/3 falls match. Not only do I have no idea when/where he did that but I don't remember it being mentioned on TV unless it was in passing.

This comes back to ROH's TV being all screwed up. The go-home show for this (dated March 8) featured Kazarian turning, the Kingdom defending against the Rebellion with Dalton Castle on commentary and a Top Prospect Tournament match. Before that it was Addiction having issues, another Top Prospect Tournament match and the setup for Rush vs. Scurll, which involved about six more people. Finally, the last

show of February featured Colt Cabana (on commentary here) squashing the Boys (title contenders here), an unrelated match and Daniels becoming #1 contender.

In the three weeks of build to this show, three out of the eight matches (World Title, TV Title, Six Man Tag Team Titles) got any kind of significant mention on TV. Maybe the other five matches were mentioned on the ROH website or something but I really should have a better idea of a pay per view by watching the last three weeks of TV. Run down the card or give us some promos (maybe you could get rid of the horrible Top Prospect Tournament matches or move them to a later date or something) or do SOMETHING to help build these matches up.

The formula worked here but you're not going to be able to rely on the wrestlers knocking it out of the park every time. So much of this show worked because the main event (which was well built and told a great story) rocked and the ladder match had people who know how to work that match to near perfection. You can't rely on that every single time and a big solution to that problem is to fix their freaking TV. I mean, they haven't in years and it's not going to get better anytime soon but it need to get better. Anyway, really strong show here and one of ROH's best in a long time.

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