

MLW Never Say Never: They Might Have A Hit On Their Hands



IMG Credit: Major League Wrestling

Never Say Never

Date: December 12, 2017

Location: Gilt Nightclub, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 250

Commentators: Rich Bocchini, Tony Schiavone

I'm still at it with these one off shows that MLW ran before they got a full time TV show. This is their second such show after a pretty good first edition. A few months have passed and there isn't much to preview here as there wasn't much set up to build towards a second show. If most of the cast is back though, this should be fun. Let's get to it.

The opening video has a Christmas theme with places at a table set for various wrestlers. Jimmy Havoc is there with a glass of wine to say Happy

Christmas. That was creepy in a way.

Opening sequence.

Tom Lawlor vs. Matt Riddle

Well this could be good. It's almost weird seeing Lawlor with clean looking hair. Feeling out process to start as they trade some light punches with neither going anywhere. Some grappling goes the same way with Lawlor holding him up against the ropes. Riddle takes him down into a rear naked choke but Lawlor makes the rope in short order. Some heavy forearms in the corner keep Lawlor in trouble so his unnamed corner men take him to the floor for a much needed breather.

Back in and Riddle tries the hold again as the audio keeps going up and down. Lawlor drops back for the break but makes the eternal mistake of stopping to point at his head, allowing Riddle to grab it for the third time. Riddle is sent throat first into the top rope for the break and a good looking overhead belly to belly gives Lawlor...no cover actually as Riddle chops him from the mat. A chinlock goes on with Riddle immediately fighting up and kicking him in the knee.

Lawlor is right back with a triangle choke but Riddle gets out again so it's a release German suplex, with Riddle bouncing back to his feet first. That's fine with Lawlor as he throws Riddle with another German suplex, this time for two. Riddle pops up again and hits a jumping knee to the face, setting up the Bro To Sleep (that's so corny that it's awesome) into a bridging German suplex for two more.

A backsplash gives Riddle another two but Lawlor t-bones him down. Lawlor's piledriver is countered into a backdrop driver with Riddle holding him on his back and dropping down (cool) but Lawlor is right back with a Tombstone for one. Riddle starts striking away and picks him up for a Tombstone of his own, only to slam Lawlor down onto his back instead. Lawlor slaps on a Fujiwara armbar and rolls into a double arm crank. That goes nowhere so he tries a cross armbreaker, with Riddle rolling out and elbowing him in the face. The rear naked choke goes on and Lawlor flips the fans off before passing out at 14:56.

Rating: B. They played to their strengths here but it's so strange to see Lawlor take a clean fall. He would go on to become one of the top stars in the promotion and having Riddle just beat him like this is very strange. Riddle wouldn't be around long though as he was all but destined to be in WWE. Given his look and skill level so soon into his career, it really was just a matter of time.

Post match Lawlor's corner men interrupt Riddle's interview so he beats them up too. Riddle says if Lawlor wants to bring in his bros, Riddle can bring in his buddy Jeff Cobb for a tag match next month. Lawlor doesn't say anything.

MVP is ready for his match tonight when Stokely Hathaway comes in to make an offer. That's not cool with MVP, which doesn't work for Hathaway. MVP basically tells him not to do anything stupid and to be wise.

Saieve Al Sabah vs. Mike Parrow

Fallout from last time when Parrow powerbombed him. Saieve jumps him before the bell but gets shoved away with ease. Some snap jabs work a bit better, though for all of three seconds as Parrow suplexes him down. One heck of a clothesline knocks Saieve out of his show (dang) and a big toss sends him outside for a great looking bump. Parrow powerbombs him into the post, followed by a fall away slam into the corner for two more. Saieve gets in a shot to the knee and pulls out some brass knuckles. The powerbomb is broken up with right hands to Parrow's head to give Saieve the pin at 3:38.

Rating: D+. Saieve's bumping looked great but the booking didn't work very well. Parrow dominated him but then loses in the last few seconds after Saieve gets in two or three shots? I've never been a fan of that kind of booking and the knuckles finish didn't felt way out of place. Parrow looks awesome though and that's going to keep him around for a good while.

Dirty Blonds vs. Seth Petruzelli/Rhett Giddins

The Blonds are a southern team with some size to him while Petruzelli is the striking coach at the WWE Performance Center. Another pre-bell attack

(with Tony pointing out how common they've been tonight) doesn't work for the Blonds as stereo superkicks put them on the floor. Giddins starts with Leo Brien (partner of Michael Patrick) with both guys taking their time early on. Brien shoulders the heck out of him but Giddins pops back up for a slam.

That means a breather on the floor, where they take Petruzelli off the apron. Giddins gets choked down and Petruzelli gets knocked off the apron again. The Blonds take turns beating on Giddins as Tony is having a great time listing off the old southern wrestlers that have inspired them. A chinlock doesn't last very long so Patrick knees Giddins back down. The diving tag attempt is broken up again with Petruzelli being pulled down for the third time.

We hit the nerve hold for a bit but Giddins fights up and kicks him in the face. A discus punch and rolling out of the way of an elbow are enough for the tag to Petruzelli, who receives almost no reaction whatsoever. Petruzelli barely gets to do anything before a low blow cuts him down. Giddins comes back in off a blind tag and a hard clothesline finishes Brien out of nowhere at 8:28.

Rating: D. I wasn't feeling this one, even though I like the Blonds quite a bit. Giddins looked good but it felt like they were limiting Petruzelli's in-ring time. That made for a weird match and the ending felt really sudden. This was easily the weakest thing that they've done so far but maybe it was just a one off.

Barrington Hughes, a 400lb+ monster, warms up with a huge meal of pizza, burgers and fries. He'd like his privacy though and tells the cameras to leave.

Barrington Hughes vs. Andrew Merlin

Trash talk, elbow to the head, seated senton to crush Merlin at 22 seconds. Bocchini: "Maybe nine seconds?" I didn't know King Kong Bundy was now wrestling as Barrington Hughes.

Chelsea Green, who is scheduled to face Santana Garrett, has been attacked by a woman we can't see.

Vandal Ortagun vs. Jimmy Yuta

Ortagun used to be in NXT on the Florida circuit. They trade chops to start as we hear about Yuta currently being a student. You don't hear that every day. Ortagun gets dropped onto his face for a running kick as the announcers talk about Ortagun's time in NXT. It's so weird hearing Tony talk about modern wrestling. A chop block cuts Yuta down and it's time for the Ric Flair knee work package.

The leg gets wrapped around the middle rope and there's a dragon screw leg whip for two. Yuta fights up and hits a backdrop, followed by a rollup into a superkick. Thankfully Tony explains that the knee injury prevented it from being at full strength because he knows how to do his job. Ortagun takes him down by the knee again and the half crab goes on. Yuta grabs the rope and is right back with a Blue Thunder Bomb. The top rope elbow is enough to finish Ortagun at 6:21.

Rating: C. Yuta has grown on me a lot over the last few months and there's potential in there to be a perfectly good high flier. He's got a good look and can wrestle a pretty good match. That's not bad for someone so young. Ortagun is a good choice for a spot like this as he's got the experience to make anyone look good, which is what you want for someone young like Yuta. Nice match here.

Jimmy Havoc and Darby Allin are ready to hurt Shane Strickland and John Hennigan in the main event. A lot of blood is promised.

Santana Garrett vs. Leva Bates

Bates is better known as Blue Pants and she dances to the ring. She's also not the person who attacked Chelsea as the hair color doesn't match. Santana takes her to the mat to start and holds onto a headlock. Back up and Bates shoves her away, only to get rolled up for two. Bates has no choice but to shake her hand as Garrett is toying with her so far. Something like the Black Widow is broken up and Bates kicks her in the back.

That earns Bates a high five but she's mean enough to grab a rollup for two of her own. Santana gets in something close to a Last Chancery for a

few seconds but Bates slips out and puts on a Crossface. That's broken up as well and Garrett is back with a front facelock. Tony starts talking about Larry Zbyszko teaching Garrett psychology, which isn't the kind of thing you expect most commentators to bring up.

Bates trips Garrett down and poses before hitting a slingshot rolling spear for two. Garrett loses her headband so Bates stomps on it, which just ticks her off again. They start shoving and shouting at each other until Bates charges into a raised boot in the corner. A Russian legsweep gets two and Garrett goes after her in the corner, only to get caught in the Tree of Woe. Bates hits the top rope double stomp but goes back up and gets hurricanranaed back down. Garrett hits a handspring moonsault (cool) for the pin at 14:38.

Rating: C+. Garrett really is a solid worker and I'm a little bit surprised she hasn't been signed up by a bigger name company. They told a nice little story here and while Bates was in over her head, she fought her way through it and they had a nice match as a result. Not too bad here, which is better than having a women's match for the sake of a women's match.

Post match Garrett poses and the same woman who attacked Green runs in for a kick to the knee.

Maxwell Jacob Friedman has a promo in the back but there's no audio.

Maxwell Jacob Friedman vs. Joey Ryan

These two are joined at the hip. Friedman brags about being awesome and undefeated, both of which will still be the case after the match. The bell rings but Joey has to give away a lollipop and oil up. With that out of the way, Joey offers him a chance to touch it. He tries to force Friedman's hand down there so Friedman escapes and demands that the fans stop encouraging it.

Friedman tries an atomic drop and that's probably a sprained MCL at least. Joey tries to make him touch it again and now it's time for the lollipop from the trunks. That's finally enough for Friedman, who kicks him in the ribs and sends Joey shoulder first into the post. An armbar

goes on for a bit until Joey sends him to the apron but Friedman comes back with a springboard Codebreaker to the arm. Ryan gets in a spinebuster for two but Friedman bails to the floor before the superkick.

Of course that means a suicide dive to take Friedman down again but he's right back with a powerbomb inside. Friedman goes for the lollipop, only to have his arm chopped to put it into his own mouth. That means the superkick so Ryan can drop to his back as Friedman does the comical fall onto the crotch. The staggered Friedman takes a Canadian Destroyer but Ryan goes for the crotch again, allowing Friedman to poke him in the eye. Another armbar makes Ryan tap at 8:22.

Rating: C-. I don't know if it's listening to Ryan's very good out of character interviews or just how dedicated he is to the gimmick, but the guy is growing on me. Friedman going over makes sense as he's the kind of guy who is going to be around here more frequently. Ryan is a bigger name too and a win over him means a little more. Perfectly fine comedy match here.

Post match Joey offers a handshake but gets flipped off. I think you can guess where that hand goes, setting up the special suplex.

Plug for the MLW podcasts. Some of those aren't half bad either.

MVP has nothing to say about his discussions with Stokely Hathaway.

MVP vs. Brody King

King is a very big guy with a ton of tattoos. They stare each other down to start but MVP stops to yell something at the crowd that I can't make out. The battle over the lockup goes nowhere so King kicks him in the face to take over. A backsplash (with some height) gets one and a running splash in the corner hits MVP again. MVP misses a boot in the corner and gets kicked out to the floor for his failed efforts. King throws him over a pile of chairs onto the concrete for a crash.

You don't put a wrestler near chairs as MVP uses one to crack him a few times but he can't suplex him onto the open chair. A slugout goes to MVP but Hathaway pops up for a distraction, allowing King to shove MVP onto

the chairs again. They finally get back in so King can hit a tilt-a-whirl slam for two. King misses a dropkick but, as usual, the Ballin Elbow takes FOREVER to set up, allowing King to clothesline him back down.

A gutwrench sitout powerbomb gets two more but another powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana. MVP gets in a t-bone suplex and they're both down with MVP holding his back. His back is so messed up that the Playmaker takes too long, allowing King to hit a Michinoku Driver for two of his own. King misses a spinning high crossbody though and a running kick to the head finishes him off at 11:53.

Rating: C. Nice power brawl here but MVP still doesn't do much for me. He's a guy who used to be someone but there's very little about him that stands out in any of his modern matches. King is good in a Luke Harper type big man enforcer role and that's a job you could have for a very long time going forward.

They shake hands post match.

The announcers talk about an upcoming World Title tournament. So this place has a bit more of a future.

Sammy Guevara vs. Jason Cade

Sammy has Salina de la Renta with him. We have to stall for a few seconds so Sammy can take off his shirt and that means a dueling chant of MILK FIRST vs. CEREAL FIRST. This is what the two of them have been talking about on Twitter as of late, because that's what wrestling has become. Just picture Race and Brisco having that discussion. Sammy takes over to start by sending him to the floor but Cade slides back inside for a dropkick. Cade's dive is blocked by a jumping knee to the floor and now Sammy gets in a dive.

Cade is right back in for a dive of his own but this time he spends too much time bragging and gets hit with a dive as well. Since that's not enough, Cade slides back in for another dive. Fans: "CEREAL FIRST!" Back in and the announcers debate types of cereal as Cade scores with some chops. A Russian legsweep puts Guevara on the apron but they think better about going to the top at the same time. Salina offers a distraction so

Sammy can hit a top rope double stomp (kind of) onto the apron.

Sammy stays on the ribs by running the ropes before stopping for a chinlock. He's no Kevin Owens but Sami Zayn is no Salina. Cade fights up and hits a Russian legsweep into the corner, followed by a springboard crossbody for no cover. A handspring Codebreaker gets two with Salina screaming or a kickout. Sammy is fine enough for a Spanish Fly and a low superkick but a shooting star misses.

They trade strikes to the face, miss strikes to the face, and then hit strikes to the face at the same time for a double knockdown. It's Cade up first with a running knee to the face and a Code Red for two. Sammy kicks him off the top for a crash and now the shooting star press connects for a near fall of his own.

We pause a bit for Guevara to be frustrated...and then he climbs onto a speaker outside of the ring. A running start only sees him dive into a superkick to the ribs but Cade can't follow up. Guevara gets caught up top and Cade snaps off a reverse hurricanrana for two with Salina putting Sammy's foot on the ropes. It seems to do the trick as Sammy grabs a rollup for the pin at 14:48.

Rating: C. This felt like the required indy match and while that's fine, it was a little long for this late in the card. I like Cade, but he's not someone who gets big wins most of the time. That's not the worst place to be on the card as he's going to put in watchable matches, but I'm not sure on Sammy. He has the pieces, but hasn't put them together just yet. More time would help, which is the case for so many of these younger guys.

Hathaway swears vengeance on MVP.

Shane Strickland talks about being proud of beating Ricochet last time but Darby Allin and Jimmy Havoc attacked Shane to ruin his moment. They want to give Shane what he wants so Shane is ready to fight with John Hennigan at his side.

Shane Strickland/John Hennigan vs. Darby Allin/Jimmy Havoc

No DQ and the thumbtacks are poured out before the good guys come out. Hennigan makes the mistake of charging in before Shane shows up. He fights out of a double suplex so Shane can even things out (coming through the crowd for some reason) and the fight is on with Allin dropkicking Hennigan almost into the tacks. Shane throws Allin into them instead and Hennigan powerbombs Havoc onto Allin onto the tacks for a good visual. Havoc's chop hits post (though he pulled up) and it's already time for a table.

With chops not working, Havoc pokes Shane in the eye to cut him off. Hennigan and Allin get back inside and fight on the corner but head to the floor instead. Havoc busts out a staple gun and you can hear the groan in Tony's voice. That means a piece of paper gets stapled to Shane's face (Tony: "WHAT AM I WATCHING???") and another to his back. Shane is right back with a staple into Havoc's head as the announcers are losing it. Tony: "Ok. We have lost our minds."

They trade off with Allin armdragging (that feels out of place at the moment) Shane but being left alone in the ring. Havoc isn't done with the staples and here's Allin to flip dive onto the two of them. It's time for a bunch of chairs in the ring (Tony: "After a staple gun, a chair is kind of a disappointment for me.") with one of them being wedged in the corner. Havoc gets extra evil by cutting Hennigan's fingers with the edge of the paper (a kind of brilliant way to go in a hardcore match) and Bocchini says that's worse than the staples. I mean....maybe?

Havoc has a seat in a chair but Hennigan gets back up and backdrops him onto two unfolded chairs. That actually gets two as the announcers are surprised that you can get pins here. Fair enough given the level of carnage here. Shane comes back in with a 450 on Allin and it's time for a cookie sheet. Allin flips out of a German suplex and hits Shane in the knee with Hennigan having to come back in for a save.

Allin's Coffin Drop is countered into an armbar and Shane snaps the arm back for a snap that actually made my mouth come open and the rest of me cringe. Havoc comes back in for some forearms but gets catapulted into a cookie sheet to the head. Strickland kicks him in the head but Havoc knocks Hennigan down and takes Shane to the apron. One heck of an

enziguri staggers Havoc and an AA off the apron sends him through a table. Back in and Starship Pain only gets two on Havoc but the crowd reaction isn't that strong as they're going too long here.

Havoc tries to beg and then gets caught going for the double low blow. As Hennigan and Strickland look to deal with him, Allin dives off the balcony with a chair to take them both out and they've got the crowd right back. Allin sets up another table but takes too long, allowing Hennigan and Strickland to put him on it instead. They both go up top but here's the woman who attacked Garrett to shove Hennigan to the floor. A double superplex puts Shane through a table for two and the woman throws in a chain. Havoc wraps it around his arm and clotheslines the heck out of Shane for the pin at 18:49.

Rating: B. They knew what they were going for here and then executed it. Havoc and Allin are good hardcore guys and it's impressive to have them beat some big names like Hennigan and Strickland. On top of that, it was a heck of a violent match with the announcers actually adding a lot in that "this is insane" style. There's also something great about Tony watching this violent stuff and it made things that much better.

Hathaway has a press conference to talk about MVP where he talks about MVP being in prison earlier in the 2000s. Someone negotiated a deal with WWE and then another with New Japan. That someone is of course Hathaway, who is now in charge of Black Friday Management (the heel stable started by Gary Hart in the original MLW). Therefore, Hathaway controls MVP so he'll be facing Low Ki next month.

Overall Rating: C+. I had a good time here and that's what matters most on the second show in a promotion's lifespan. They offered a nice balance of stuff from start to finish and the show never started to drag. I want to see where things go from here and that's the most important thing they can do. It's pretty impressive to see how well they've hit the ground running and if they can keep that up, they might have a hit on their hands.

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