

Final Battle 2018: And It Might Be The Last Time



IMG Credit: Ring of Honor Wrestling

Final Battle 2018

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Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Colt Cabana

As tends to be the case, this is the best promotion of a show that ROH has done all year and that's the best thing that could happen on the biggest show of the year. The big question here is whether this will be the last big show for Cody and the Young Bucks, who both happen to be in title matches tonight. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Cody debuting here two years ago and then losing the World Title here last year. The rest of the big matches get some attention as well.

The announcers run down more of the card.

Kenny King vs. Eli Isom

They added an extra hour to this show and this is the kind of thing they spent the extra time on? Before the match, King says he doesn't want to be here against a commercial for the ROH Dojo. Tonight, King gets to prove that the old school is better than the new school. King knocks Isom

into the corner to take over and sends him outside for the big corkscrew dive. A clothesline hits the post but Isom can't do anything because King can beat him up with one arm.

Back in and Isom goes with three straight leapfrogs into a knee to the face to send King outside. That means the no hands flip dive as the fans are already getting into Isom. Isom's armbar doesn't get him far as King dropkicks him down and grabs a reverse suplex into a Stunner. Isom hits an enziguri and gets two off a very low lifting powerbomb. King is right back with Be Kind Rewind for two with King pulling him up before three. A quick Gory Bomb sets up a backslide driver for two on King but he dives into the Samoan driver for the pin at 9:00.

Rating: C-. Not a great match or anything but Isom has been a very pleasant surprise in the last few months. While he's not great in the ring, I was expecting another Cheeseburger and got someone I could see turning into a completely solid midcarder one day. He had a nice performance here and with while he wasn't ready to beat King, it was nice to see him hanging in there with him.

Post match King won't shake his hand.

We recap Adam Page vs. Jeff Cobb. Jeff showed up and immediately won the TV Title but Page isn't impressed. He wants to show that someone is just as strong as Cobb and can hang with him everywhere. I'm not sure if he can do that, but I'm also not sure Page can't pull it off, which makes for an entertaining match.

TV Title: Jeff Cobb vs. Adam Page

Cobb is defending. Page isn't playing here and goes right at Cobb with some running forearms and big boots to the jaw. He keeps getting shoved off but Page goes at him again and again as they're certainly starting fast. Another dropkick puts Cobb on the floor but he catches the shooting star off the apron and sends Page flying with an overhead belly to belly. Back in and Page takes the knee out but mostly misses a Lionsault (barely slapping Cobb's chest) for two.

Page heads up but gets caught in a fifteen second one armed superplex

(good freaking grief). Cobb's standing shooting star (because of course) misses so he goes to the middle rope, only to have Page roll through a crossbody into a fall away slam. That sends Cobb outside for the suicide dive and the middle rope moonsault as the fans are losing it over this stuff. Back in and Page hits a pair of running shooting stars for two and it's time for the big slugout.

Cobb pulls Page out of the corner and flips him up into a sitout Tombstone for two more and Page is shaken. He's fine enough to hit a superkick and a pair of discus forearms to rattle Cobb, who headbutts him right out to the apron. That's the perfect place for the Buckshot Lariat but the Right of Passage is countered into a release F5 for two more. The Tour of the Islands is countered into a crucifix but another Buckshot Lariat attempt doesn't work, allowing Cobb to hit the Tour of the Islands on the second attempt. Cobb isn't done though and hits a second in a row to retain at 13:34.

Rating: B+. Cobb is right there with Brian Cage for the THAT'S NOT NORMAL award. He's big and stout but can do flips and dives while also being an Olympic wrestler. I mean, what are you supposed to do with someone like that? At the same time, Page has become one of the most well rounded workers in the company and would have a rocket attached to his back if and when he winds up in NXT. This was a blast and worth checking out.

Madison Rayne talks about training her entire career for this moment.

Kelly Klein wants a fair title shot. These are the same promos that aired on TV.

We recap the Women's Title match, which is basically Sumie Sakai defending against most of the division.

Women of Honor Title: Sumie Sakai vs. Kelly Klein vs. Karen Q vs. Madison Rayne

Sakai is defending under elimination rules with Mandy Leon on commentary. Kelly and Madison fight in one corner while the others fight in another, leaving Leon to offer her, *ahem...eh* screw the sarcasm. She's really not good at this and we'd be better off with Caprice Coleman instead. Klein

and Karen are sent outside with Sumie chopping away at Madison and getting two off a middle rope crossbody.

Karen breaks up a crossface chickenwing on Madison for no apparent reason and puts both of them in a Boston crab at the same time. Kelly and Karen start double teaming Madison with a t-bone suplex, only to have Karen kick Kelly in the face by mistake. We get the required Tower of Doom with Kelly handling the powerbombing but Sumie hangs onto the top and hits a missile dropkick on Kelly. It doesn't do much damage though as Kelly is up with K Power to finish Karen at 6:56.

Madison hits a quick tornado DDT for two on Kelly and the Rayne Drop gets the same on Sumie. The champ is right back up with Smash Mouth to Madison and Kelly steals the pin at 8:58 to get us down to two. Sumie takes her down into a cross armbreaker but Kelly keeps her grip. The powerbomb isn't enough to break it up so they stand up where Smash Mouth can connect for two. A hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb to give Klein two and K Power gets the same. Super K Power finally gives us a new champion at 13:41.

Rating: C. Not bad but they didn't have the epic match that they were shooting for. No matter what Ring of Honor tried to do, Sumie's title reign wasn't epic and the title change is just a regular title change. There's nothing special or important about this because Sumie's time with the title wasn't all that great. She wasn't interesting and her matches were nothing of note, but the company stuck with her forever and it made the title seem less and less important every time.

Kelly is presented with the title and hugs Sakai. Totally out of character for Kelly but when does that ever stop anyone?

Jonathan Gresham wants to prove himself against the other best technical wrestler in the world.

Jonathan Gresham vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

This should be awesome. Sabre slaps him in the face before the bell and Gresham manages to stay calm. Gresham wins the early wrestle off and they're both right back up. It turns into a shoving match until Sabre

takes him down by the wrist. Gresham grabs the leg to escape but can't get much further than that. Some headlocks into headscissors let Sabre grab a hammerlock before going back to the headscissors to keep Gresham down.

Gresham manages to lock up the legs and sit up for a slugout but it's another standoff as the fans are very pleased. They hit the mat again with Gresham grabbing the arm until Sabre fights up and grabs an abdominal stretch. He even rolls down into an armbar on the mat as the crazy counters continue. Back up and Sabre uppercuts him, with Gresham saying bring it on. It turns into a slap off, which just looks pathetic no matter what explanation they have. Throw punches already.

A half crab has Sabre in trouble but he reverses into a triangle choke because that's something people can do. That's reversed into the Octopus, which Sabre reverses into an ankle lock. Gresham turns that into an ankle lock of his own until Sabre rolls out and hits a kick to the chest. Another strike off goes to Sabre but he misses a moonsault, allowing Gresham to drop a knee on the arm. The armbar is countered into a cradle with Sabre bridging off his head for the pin (like the cocky jerk that he is) at 11:49.

Rating: B. This felt like something out of Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit from the 2003 Royal Rumble where Benoit got caught instead of getting beaten. It was exactly what this should have been with both guys looking incredible and having an excellent display of holds and counterholds. There's going to be a rematch at some point, and that should certainly be the case.

Sabre won't shake hands, because he's a jerk.

We recap Dalton Castle vs. Matt Taven. Castle is back from an injury but Taven called him weak for missing time. Taven also says that he's the real World Champion so a win over Castle would be a big deal for him.

Dalton Castle vs. Matt Taven

Castle has an army of Boys and is rolled out on the back of a glittery mini stage. Sounds normal for him. TK O'Ryan insists that Taven be

introduced as the REAL World Champion and we get some confetti falling. Matt is feeling extra generous tonight and makes this a title match, with Castle touching the title because why not. It's straight into a slugout to start and they head outside. Back in and Castle strikes the peacock pose so Taven sends him to the apron.

A springboard kick to the face knocks Castle off but the Boys catch him, allowing Castle to come back in and slug away. Taven knocks him outside for a running dropkick through the ropes and a suicide dive, but the big no hands dive hits barricade. Castle hammers away a bit more but Taven scores with a backbreaker back inside. The seated armbar gets Castle out of trouble until Taven flips out of the corner and grabs a DDT for two. A short DDT plants Taven again but O'Ryan gets in a cheap shot.

The Boys take him out but Marseglia comes out from underneath the ring for a double DDT. The distracted referee lets Taven get in a belt shot for two with frustration setting in on the kickout. Castle dropkicks him off the apron and hits a hurricanrana from the apron. The Bang A Rang sends Taven into the post so the Kingdom gets involved again, earning themselves a double ejection. Back in and another Bang A Rang gets two with Taven grabbing the rope. Another attempt is escaped and Taven knees him in the face. The Climax gives Taven the pin at 15:50.

Rating: B. I liked this one more than I was expecting to, with Castle not being able to overcome the odds and eventually falling clean to Taven in the end. Taven might not be the most interesting guy in the world, but at least they're pushing him very hard and he'll likely get the World Title at Supercard of Honor in April.

We recap Marty Scurll vs. Christopher Daniels. Scurll beat Daniels to win the World Title shot at Survival of the Fittest, with Daniels claiming he would have won in a one on one match. Scurll agreed to put the title shot on the line, but Daniels only has one match left on his contract. Therefore, it's title shot vs. career.

Christopher Daniels vs. Marty Scurll

Daniels has a bad neck coming in. Feeling out process to start with an exchange of shoves and Daniels headlocking him down. Scurll slips out and

pats him on the bald head, which of course means war. Another takedown sets up a hammerlock on Scurll, followed by the slingshot elbow for two. Scurll elbows him to the floor but misses the superkick from the apron. Instead Daniels pulls him down for the Arabian moonsault.

Back in and Marty hits a superplex to send Daniels outside again. That means the apron superkick can connect, followed by a regular one against the barricade. Back in and they chop it out but Scurll grabs a neckbreaker to stay on...well the neck of course. There's a dropkick to the back and Daniels' neck is jarred all over again. The cravate doesn't last long and Daniels shrugs off a half and half suplex to hit a Blue Thunder Bomb. A belly to back faceplant gets two and the Lionsault gives Daniels the same.

To mix things up a bit, Daniels pulls Scurll up by the fingers but, being nicer than he was in his younger years, goes with some chops instead. Scurll kicks the leg out and gets two off a piledriver as the fans chant for Bruiser Brody (I think). The chickenwing is countered into a cradle and Daniels busts out a Burning Hammer for two.

Angel's Wings is countered into a Tombstone with the Undertaker cover getting two. Scurll snaps the fingers but Daniels hits a not completely locked Angel's Wings for two more. The Best Moonsault Ever misses and Marty superkicks him twice. Graduation gets two so Marty stomps on the neck to knock Daniels silly, setting up the chickenwing for the tap at 17:36.

Rating: B. Another good match here with a very well told story. Daniels wasn't the man he used to be and didn't quite have it anymore while Scurll was more than willing to be the villain that he was born to be. Daniels going out in defeat is exactly what you would expect here and it was a heck of a big win for Scurll. Well done all around and the ending was exactly as it should have gone.

Post match Scurll leaves and Daniels gets the big moment...until Bully Ray comes in to low blow him. Ray calls out Flip Gordon and it's time for the I Quit match, which is all about Ray being a jerk to the younger Gordon, who he doesn't think is a man.

Flip Gordon vs. Bully Ray

Gordon is in military gear and comes through the crowd carrying the American flag. He comes over the barricade and springboards in with a Phenomenal forearm as commentary is completely behind Gordon here. They fight to the floor with Ray being sent into the barricade for a running forearm. A trashcan to the head gets Ray out of trouble and it's time for a table. Ray can't powerbomb him through it though and Gordon grabs another table as commentary admits that they're a bit biased here. Just in case you're kind of dumb you see.

Ray gets in what looked like a chain shot and stops to yell at various executives before shoving ring announcer Bobby Cruise. The referee yells at him too and gets tossed aside, leaving Ray to threaten ROH ambassador Cary Silkin. Daniels runs back in and dives over Silkin to protect him but gets dropped as well. Gordon gets thrown down but won't quite. Instead Ray grabs Gordon's girlfriend and threatens to powerbomb her through the table.

The bloody Gordon wants to quit (without actually doing it) to save her but Silkin hits Ray with the kendo stick instead. Gordon gets up and makes the save before giving his girlfriend a very bloody kiss. A top rope flag shot to the head sets up a Crossface with the flag but Silas Young runs in for the save and Misery. It's time for lighter fluid both on Gordon and a table so here's Cheeseburger to go after Young.

That earns him Misery (shame they didn't burn him instead) so Colt Cabana comes in to fight them both until a low blow from Young stops him as well. Silas gets the lighter...and there go the lights because Sandman is here. On the biggest ROH show of the year because THIS NEEDS TO BE ABOUT ECW TOO!!! Beer is consumed and Ray misses a charge, allowing Gordon to hit a good superkick (Sandman didn't hit Ray). A less good Star Spangled Stunner lets Gordon grab a pair of kendo sticks and unload on Ray for the win at 14:23.

Rating: C+. I'm not sure on this one. They had a bunch of stuff that fit with the story, but at the same time there was too much crammed into less than fifteen minutes. Gordon winning on his own in the end was the right

call so they got the finish right, but at the same time there wasn't enough of a focus on him having to fight back and overcome the adversity. I did like it and it was good, but they needed either more time or less stuff. Like less Sandman for example.

Caprice Coleman joins commentary to replace Cabana.

We recap the World Title match. Cody debuted here two years ago at Final Battle and then lost the World Title to Dalton Castle here last year. He hasn't gotten a one on one title rematch yet so tonight it's his second match against Lethal at Final Battle. This hasn't been a strong build, but that happens a lot with the World Title.

ROH World Title: Cody vs. Jay Lethal

Cody is defending and has Brandi Rhodes with him. He's also in military gear, which is probably too close to the previous match. Jay has a wish list on his back, ala Cody's list when he left WWE for a nice touch. Hang on though as Cody grabs the mic and says it sounds like the fans love him. Fans: "WE DON'T LOVE YOU!" Well you can't say they aren't being clear about their thoughts.

Cody certainly doesn't love them, because if he did, he would be working the Madison Square Garden show. That earns him a Stardust chant and Cody is a little panicked. Jay says this is his company and he's leaving the new gold of the company dull. Feeling out process to start with Cody not being able to take over on the leg. A headlock doesn't work either and Cody slides between the legs but comes up holding his own knee. Of course he's faking and slides outside for a kiss from Brandi and a chorus of booing.

Lethal hits another dropkick, stops to glare at the crowd (interesting), and fails at the Lethal Combination. Instead Cody starts in on the arm but pauses for some pushups. The Disaster Kick misses though and Lethal kicks the knee out again. If you're going with a regular knee attack, why do the fake knee injury earlier? The knee gets wrapped around the post but Lethal hasn't completed the Ric Flair requirements yet, meaning no Figure Four.

Jay kicks at the leg before getting an O'Connor roll but Brandi distracts the ref. Said ref is sent into the corner for a distraction, allowing Brandi to hit a spear (with her surgically repaired shoulder, her new finisher) to set up Cross Rhodes for a near fall. Back up and the referee won't let Lethal hit Shattered Dreams so Brandi comes in again, only to spear Cody by mistake. Lethal tries the Lethal Injection but hits Brandi (I use the word hits loosely as it wasn't even close), mainly due to Cody pulling her in the way.

Another Cross Rhodes gets another two and Cody slaps on the Figure Four...with the bell ringing because Adam Page runs in to ring it. I'm not sure why you would do that, as you already had Jay in trouble and ring the bell in a hurry instead of letting it do more damage. In theory it's to allow more interference, but it seems a little more complicated than it needs to be. Lethal hits his own Cross Rhodes for two but Hail to the King hits Cody's knee.

As it turns out that hurts the knee again, allowing Jay to knock him outside for the triple suicide dives. Eh it's Final Battle though so let's make it SEVEN, though Cody is fine enough to block the eighth with a spit of water to the face. Din's Fire (Vertebreaker) gives Cody two and Jay kicks Cody into the referee. That means a belt shot to Cody's knee, some low superkicks, the Lethal Injection, more low superkicks, and the Figure Four to retain at 23:51.

Rating: B-. There were a few too many shenanigans here with Lethal teasing a heel turn to go with everything else going on. With Cody likely leaving soon, I'm not complaining about Lethal retaining, but he seems to be in the middle of a six month filler reign. This place really does need some better main eventers, and as usual it feels like they take WAY too long to set people up.

Post match Scurll comes out to stare at Lethal, followed by Nick Aldis and the unnamed Kamilla Kaine for the staredown from the ramp. I...eh maybe this could work.

We recap the Ladder War. The Briscoes and Young Bucks had a heck of a match for the titles that ended in a double DQ. SCU won the titles in a

triple threat match and have their new contracts, but now we're having a big ladder match to decide things. To be fair, this is the best done story on the show and it should be the main event. If nothing else, who is supposed to follow them?

SCU says New York is the worst town but they'll make it a great memory.

Tag Team Titles: Briscoes vs. Young Bucks vs. SCU

SCU (Scorpio Sky and Frankie Kazarian) are defending here. The Briscoes head outside and start throwing chairs inside, leaving the Bucks to slug it out with the champs. The Bucks get the better of it and start superkicking until Kazarian slingshots out into a hurricanrana on Mark, sending him into a spear on Jay. Everyone heads outside with Sky being put on a table but the Briscoes chair Matt down.

Jay hits a double stomp to put Sky through the table and the Briscoes take over with various metal shots. Kazarian is busted open and Mark puts the ladder around his neck to slam into people's faces. Some superkicks break that up and Coleman thinks we might see some more later. Jay gets kicked to the floor and a wheelbarrow faceplant drops Sky. The Bucks hit a double dropkick on Sky before stopping for a Too Sweet.

The first ladder is set up but the champs take over on the Bucks, complete with some loud swearing from Sky. It's too early for the titles though and the fight over getting to climb is on. Nick and Kazarian shove the ladder back and forth at each other until stereo superkicks put the champs down. The Briscoes come back in with some chairs to clean house though until Kazarian hits a chair shot to Jay's back. Another shot takes out Kazarian's ankle though and the Briscoes take over again.

Mark gets kicked out to the floor for a flip dive from Sky and it's time to unleash the series of dives until Matt is suplexed through a table. The bloody Jay finds a staple gun but Kazarian breaks it up with a slingshot cutter through the table at ringside. And now, a sledgehammer from Matt has Jay begging him to swing. Since that's a bad idea, we get another ladder instead.

After catapulting it into Sky's face, Matt goes up but gets pulled back

down into a backbreaker onto the open chair because the back injury is his thing. Nick hits the slingshot X Factor to send Jay into a chair but the also bloody Mark brings in another ladder. A springboard spear knocks Sky off the ladder so it's time for the Meltzer Driver, with Mark diving off the ladder with a cutter for the save.

There's a Jay Driller to Matt and everyone is down for a few seconds. Jay loads up yet another ladder and then bridges a second between the standing version and the corner. Kazarian is back in with a Styles Clash to drive Jay crotch first into a chair. That's enough to get a hand on a belt with Nick going up for the save but being tossed WAY down and through a table on the floor. Jay climbs up as well and Mark pelts a chair up at Kazarian to knock him through another table, leaving Jay to pull down the titles for the win at 22:40.

Rating: A. Well that was great. This was the exact same idea that worked for the original TLC matches: take six guys and let them go completely insane with one spot after another until one team finally puts the others away after a big move. It was entertaining and nothing was going to follow it so this was the right call for the main event. Great stuff with the blood making it seem more intense, which is exactly what it should have been.

Overall Rating: B+. The extra hour didn't really need to exist here, especially with an added match of Eli Isom vs. Kenny King. I think we've established that ROH isn't going to do the sane thing of just trimming some of the longer matches down, so this is pretty much all we can do in the future.

Speaking of the future, it's clear that things are changing around here and that could be scary. Cody and the Young Bucks and company have dominated ROH for a long time now and with the strong chance that they're gone (assuming there aren't shenanigans afoot), ROH needs to change a lot going forward. I'm not sure where things are going to go, but it could be a heck of a bad time if they're not handled the right way. Or it'll be an improvement because so many people have to step up to fill in the gap. Anyway, very strong show here and a great way to close out the year.

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