

Ring of Honor 17th Anniversary Show: A Most Amazing Comeback



IMG Credit: Ring of Honor Wrestling

17th Anniversary Show

Date: March 15, 2019

Location: Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Caprice Coleman, Nick Aldis

I think the title of this show speaks for itself as we have a big pay per view in honor of the company's founding. The main event is Jay Lethal defending the World Title against Matt Taven, who continues to get a rocket push for reasons that tend to elude me. Other than that, the improbably rise of PCO continues as Villain Enterprises challenge the Briscoes for the Tag Team Titles. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on Jay Lethal's records as World Champion but Matt Taven hijacks the video, saying that he's tired of having his greatness ignored. Now you can start the show.

Kenny King vs. Marty Scurll

They're both villains and have traded wins of late but Scurll does it with a smile. Kenny even brings out his own Scurll look alike to really

rub things in. An uppercut sends King to the floor at the bell and Marty hits the apron superkick just as fast. Back in and they trade chops in the corner before Marty scores with an elbow to the face. Kenny is right back with a neck snap over the top and a springboard Blockbuster for the first two.

A Blue Thunder Bomb gets the second and we're onto the chinlock. Aldis even analyzes that, as he's very, very good on commentary so far. Marty fights up and goes up top, earning himself an enziguri to the floor. Of course the being down part doesn't last long and it's a tornado DDT off the apron for a knockdown. A snap German suplex into a backbreaker gets two on Kenny and there's a 619 of all things for the same. King is right back with some kicks to the head and a spinebuster gets two.

With the wrestling not working, Marty starts going after the fingers so King sends him outside for a senton from the apron. Back in and the Royal Flush connects but Scurll rolls outside as King is down too for some reason. Frustration sets in so King grabs a chair, which is taken away in all of a second, allowing Marty to hit him with the umbrella for the pin at 12:45.

Rating: C. Perfectly watchable opener here with Marty using the cheating to win as is his custom. You knew Marty would win here but they did the entertaining stuff to get the fans into the show, which is the entire point of an opener like this. King continues to be fine as the midcard heel and losing to someone about to fight for the World Title next month isn't going to hurt him.

We recap Jeff Cobb vs. Shane Taylor. It's a battle of the bulls with Taylor being the only person who can hang with Cobb's size and power. Cobb has been unstoppable since debuting and winning the title so this should be fun.

TV Title: Shane Taylor vs. Jeff Cobb

Cobb is defending and the fight is on at the bell with both of them no selling release suplexes. A dropkick staggers Shane but he Pounces Cobb off his feet. Some very hard chops have Cobb in trouble but he headbutts and uppercuts his way out of trouble. A running big boot sends Taylor

outside, where he spears Cobb to take over again.

Back in and a Cannonball misses, meaning Cobb can throw him around with a pumphandle suplex (that's insane). Taylor goes back to the strikes to the face until Cobb hits a clothesline, though his swing sends him falling to the floor. Back in again and they square up to each other for the slugout with Cobb hitting a running elbow in the corner. Taylor headbutts his way out of a superplex attempt so Cobb throws him down, setting up the standing moonsault for another near fall.

A spinebuster into a middle rope splash gives Taylor two of his own, only to have Cobb hit a bridging German suplex for the same. Just because they haven't shown off enough yet, Taylor hits a running Canadian Destroyer and the kickout more than seals his fate. Cobb has had it and hits the Tour of the Islands...but Taylor starts getting up. That means a second Tour of the Islands to finally put Taylor away at 13:28.

Rating: B. This was FUN. These guys beat the heck out of each other as only two hosses can and that's what everyone wanted to see them do. Cobb is a special kind of talent and Taylor has gone way beyond just being a big guy. I had a lot of fun with this as it was a pure popcorn match in the vein of an old monster movie.

We recap the Women's Title match. Mayu Iwatani won the title from Kelly Klein in a big upset and now it's time for a rematch. Normally there would be more character building and development than that, but not in ROH.

Women's Title: Kelly Klein vs. Mayu Iwatani

Iwatani is defending while Klein comes out with Camp Kelly, her unnamed goons. They actually shake hands before Klein jumps her at the bell, continuing a trend tonight. The champ gets knocked outside and it's some knees to the face to keep her in trouble inside. There's a running elbow to the face to cut off a comeback attempt as Coleman compares this to Razor Ramon vs. the 1-2-3 Kid, except Iwatani is called a star and not a rookie. And she won a long match instead of a fluke. Other than that, totally the same thing.

Iwatani fights back and hits a few kicks to set up a double stomp to the ribs. Klein wins a strike off though and sends Iwatani outside for a rather odd breather. Back in and they trade German suplexes, with Iwatani landing HARD on her neck. Mayu is fine enough to take Kelly down and hit a quick moonsault, but an attempt at a second only hits knees. K Power gives Klein two but her excessive trash talking lets Iwatani slap on a small package for the pin at 8:52.

Rating: C-. Still perfectly watchable, still have no reason to be interested in either of these two. Klein has at least been built up a little bit over the last few months...and then she loses to a Stardom name who you don't likely know unless you follow that promotion. It's a fine enough match, but absolutely nothing noteworthy.

We recap Lifeblood forming and their efforts to bring Ring of Honor back to normal. This included destroying Matt Taven's fake World Title, meaning it's time for Lifeblood vs. the rest of the Kingdom tonight.

It's not time for the tag match yet though as here's Taven to say he's not waiting another second for his title shot so let's do this RIGHT NOW.

Ring of Honor World Title: Matt Taven vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal is defending and they go straight to swinging instead of shaking hands. Some chops have Taven in early trouble until he suplexes the champ down for two. A clothesline gives Lethal the same but Taven is right back with some knees. Lethal is a little more down to earth with a right hand to the face and a suplex so Taven gives him a running forearm to the face.

We hit the chinlock on the champ to slow things down until Lethal is right back up with a dragon screw legwhip (remember that Taven had a major knee injury). The Lethal Injection is broken up and Taven blasts him with a spinning kick to the face. The chinlock goes back on as we get the breaking news of Will Ospreay challenging Jeff Cobb for the New York show. Cool match, though not the best time to announce it here.

Back up with Lethal favoring his shoulder and getting knocked out to the floor. That goes nowhere as Lethal nails a dropkick and starts in on the

back with some knees. The reverse chinlock has Taven in trouble here as they seem to be burning through a lot of time. That's broken up as well and Lethal gets two off a quick powerslam. Lethal goes for an inverted Texas Cloverleaf (with Lethal sitting on the mat and pushing on the legs) but the bad shoulder means it's only with one arm.

That's broken up as well so Lethal starts chopping and knocks Taven outside for four straight suicide dives, each on a different side of the ring. As you might expect, Lethal's shoulder is banged up but his legs are fine enough to stomp on the bad knee. A kneecrusher gets two and the referee checks on Taven, allowing him to pike Lethal in the eye. Taven starts back in on the arm (makes sense) with a DDT on said arm and then just a hard pull. The cross armbreaker doesn't last long so it's a Stroke into a crossthroat/face.

With Lethal getting close to the ropes Taven switches into the Rings of Saturn, meaning Lethal needs to use a foot to make the rope. They stare each other down with Lethal headbutting him, earning himself more damage to the shoulder. A sitout gordbuster (not a sitout Falcon Arrow Ian) knocks Lethal silly, though not silly enough that he can't hit a Lethal Combination. An enziguri has Taven in even more trouble and it's time for Hail To The King...but the red balloons pop up for a distraction from Vinny Marseglia, allowing TK O'Ryan to hit Lethal with a baseball bat.

Jonathan Gresham runs in for the save and gets his ankle crushed by a chair. They load up a table but Haskins and Williams make a save as Gresham is taken out. Taven hits a low blow into the Climax for a very close two and the shock sets in. The frog splash gets the same so he tries it again, with the second attempt hitting knees. Lethal's cutter connects for two more and they slug it out one more time.

A torture rack into a reverse Regal Roll gives Lethal another near fall but Hail to the King is countered into a crucifix. Lethal doesn't even get to his feet as he grabs the leg for the Figure Four. The rope is finally grabbed so it's time to stomp on the legs some more, much to Aldis' delight. The knee is strong enough to reverse a suplex to send Lethal over the top and through the table at ringside, with the shoulder taking a lot of it.

That's only good for two as well and a backpack Stunner gets the same. You should be able to tell what's coming here and I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. Lethal gets in a Climax of his own, setting up the Lethal Injection for the closest two yet and the fans are shocked. You don't see that kind of a reaction too often around here and it worked well. Lethal isn't sure what to do so he drops him face first onto the apron, with Taven not being able to get back inside.

A table is pulled out as Taven pulls himself to the apron. Lethal takes too long again and it's a DDT to send the shoulder into the apron. Taven bridges a ladder between the apron and the table but Lethal dropkicks him onto the ladder, which can't end well. Another Hail to the King only hits ladder, which doesn't break, though Lethal himself may.

Lethal has to be helped out so Taven hits the still great looking dive over the top to take everyone out. The Climax gets two but Lethal is out so Taven knees him in the head over and over...for two. Another frog splash is countered into another cutter for another near fall. With nothing else working, they slug it out from their knees until Lethal hits a superkick. A second Lethal Injection connects for the nearest near fall you'll see in ROH and time expires at 60:00.

Rating: B+. I had a very good time with this one and they told an awesome story, though there was a stretch where things dragged in the second half. What matters the most is there's a reason to believe that Taven can win because Lethal couldn't finish him off. The good thing here though is I bought Taven as someone who was a threat to the title, which is quite impressive given how horribly uninteresting his promos and character have been over the last...ever actually. Anyway, great match here, and I get why they went with this in the middle of the show instead of the close.

Post match they're both done so Marty Scurll comes out to hold up the title. Both guys get helped out.

Silas Young has attacked Gresham backstage.

Here's a rapper named Mega Ran to perform but Bully Ray interrupts to say rap music sucks. Ray insults Man's name being ripped off from a video game and then accuses Ran of playing wrestling games as a kid and playing

as him. Ran: "Actually I played as D-Von." Ray goes after both of them but security gets rid of them. That leaves Ray to rant about being the only one here or in New Japan to wrestle at Madison Square Garden. He even main evented and sold the place out. The fans chant for Flip Gordon but Ray cuts them off and issues an open challenge for the Madison Square Garden show. That...could be interesting.

We recap Rush vs. Bandido. Rush arrived and Bandido offered friendship but got turned down, meaning it's time for a fight over who is the best Mexican import. I think?

Rush vs. Bandido

Dalton Castle is on commentary, with Coleman thanking him for bringing the Boys with him for the fanning. They don't shake hands so it's straight to the mat as Castle says both of them are rather handsome with great hair. Rush gets the better of things and it's time for the flipping around with neither getting anywhere. That means a standoff until Bandido sends him outside, only to have a hurricanrana countered into a powerbomb.

Rush whips him into the barricade a few times and it's a dropkick to the back of the head back inside. It's too early to make a serious play for the mask so Rush claps a bit instead. Bandido isn't much for clapping so he pops back up and kicks Rush to the floor for the big Fosbury Flop. Back in and a snap powerslam gives Bandido two but Rush knocks him into the corner for a breather.

A running kick to the face in the corner lets Rush hit the Tranquilo pose. The running Canadian Destroyer plants Bandido but he pops up for a running headscissors for the double knockdown. Rush knocks him off the top though and hits the apron superplex Bandido is back with a suplex and the springboard 450 with Rush caught in the ropes gives him two of his own.

Back up and Bandido gets dropkicked out of the air, setting up a big flip dive to the floor. An apron piledriver is countered with a hurricanrana off the apron and they're both down on the floor. They head inside with Rush taking a knee to the head but being fine enough to suplex him into

the corner. The running corner dropkick (The Bullhorns) finishes Bandido at 14:52.

Rating: B-. I'm still not sure why they were fighting because we never got a translation or subtitles but the match was your high flying, hard hitting lucha libre style fight and that's what they were brought in to do. Bandido is a great high flier and Rush is clearly a star in the making (if not already made). ROH needs to enjoy Rush while he can, as he might not be around much longer given how good he could be.

Post match Castle gets in the ring and challenges Rush for Madison Square Garden. That might be a si.

Silas Young has attacked Jonathan Gresham so there's no match between the two of them. Haskins/Williams vs. Kingdom is off too due to time constraints. This kind of thing happens WAY too often for ROH.

We recap the main event, with the newly debuted Villain Enterprises going after the Tag Team Champion Briscoes in a wild brawl in Texas. Do I need much more of an explanation? It's the Briscoes vs. PCO/Brody King in a street fight.

Silas Young joins commentary.

Tag Team Titles: Briscoes vs. Villain Enterprises

The Briscoes are defending in a Las Vegas street fight. They all head to the floor for weapons to start and go straight at it with the chairs to the back. The champs get the better of it as Silas says PCO/King don't seem so tough now. The huge King is fine enough to hit a spinning high crossbody to take Mark down, leaving Jay to take a Michinoku Driver off the apron through a table.

Back in and PCO has King chop him to fire him up a bit but it's King using a chair to drive another chair between Jay's legs for the always painful looking spot. Mark kendo sticks PCO down and the Briscoes get a chance to double team King inside. A table is set up in one corner and a chair is wedged into another but King drives a Briscoe into each of them, with a Death Valley Driver putting Mark through the table.

Jay is busted open from hitting the chair so PCO hits him in the head with a piece of the table. King takes the stick away from Mark and hammers away but Jay drops PCO back first onto the apron as the announcers freak out over the blood on them. Back in and the very bloody Jay has King in trouble as Mark sets up a pair of tables at ringside.

The Blockbuster off the top takes King off the apron through the tables and King gets thrown back inside. The Jay Driller is only good for two (and a rather lame response from the crowd) so the champs beat on King with kendo sticks. PCO comes back and takes a beating of his own, which only fires him up. He breaks both sticks so Jay stabs him in the throat with the jagged stick to cut him off.

Another table is set up but King slams Mark off the apron and through a pile of chairs. The Jay Driller through the table is broken up and King hits a "piledriver" through the table instead. Back in and the moonsault onto the chair onto Jay is enough for the pin and the titles at 19:44.

Rating: A-. Sometimes you need to go all out with the violence and the blood which is what they did here and it was a heck of a ride. PCO and King winning the titles is a great way to end the show and it's almost impossible to believe that PCO went from basically retired to this comeback. Really that's one of the best stories you'll see in wrestling and this worked very well for what might be the apex of his career. Great violent match here and a good chance of pace after everything they've had on the show.

Overall Rating: A-. Shortened card aside, this was a heck of a show and the kind of thing that Ring of Honor does well. Their TV might not be the best thing in the world but at least they can nail the big shows. The question now is what they can do on the huge stage, and there's a chance that they could make something work incredibly well. It's worth seeing and at less than three and a half hours, it doesn't even run that long. Check this one out and have a good time.

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