

Hidden Gems Collection #11: Developmental Tour

Hidden Gems #11

Date: 2007, 2011, 2016, 2017

Since it took me the better part of forever to get through with the Christmas stuff, I might as well pick up the pace a little bit here. This time around it's just a collection of matches and with this, I'll have everything from 2007 until the present, at least until they add even more stuff to this amazing lineup of stuff. Let's get to it.

Jamin Olivencia vs. Tommaso

Date: March 10, 2007

Location: Davis Arena, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Dean Hill, Kenny Bolin

From Ohio Valley Wrestling. Jamin is an OVW legend and this is Tommaso's (Ciampa of course) debut. Just to mess with me, Tommaso has hair and they go with a lockup onto the mat. A rollup gives Tommaso two and Jamin gets his own for the same. Jamin's shoulder gets two more and it's off to a headlock for some of the most obvious spot calling I've ever seen. Back up and Tommaso hits a Samoan drop and a whip into the corner for two each. The chinlock goes on for a bit but Olivencia gets up an elbow in the corner. Jamin's top rope elbow misses though and it's a reverse DDT to finish Olivencia at 3:31.

Rating: C-. There was nothing great or even noteworthy here but they were working at a fast pace and had a lot of energy. Having Tommaso win is a good way to set him up for the future, though he wouldn't be in OVW for very long. This is another historical curiosity and that's what this series specializes in.

To FCW!

Grand Royale

Date: January 16, 2011

Location: FCW Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Matt Martlaro, Byron Saxton

Bo Rotundo, Brad Maddox, Calvin Raines, Damien Sandow, Hunico, Jinder Mahal, Kenny Li, Lucky Cannon, Marcus Owens, Percy Watson, Peter Orlov, Richie Steamboat, Roman Leakee, Seth Rollins, Titus O'Neill, Xavier Woods

The winner gets a Florida Heavyweight Title shot against Masion Ryan, Rotundo is Bo Dallas, Orlov is Alex Kozlov and the other names you don't know aren't important enough to talk about. This is a different kind of match as everyone stands on the floor to start and a bell rings. Everyone tries to get in and whoever is in after thirty seconds has a battle royal.

A bunch of them get in and Li is thrown out almost immediately. That leaves twelve names in the ring and a battle royal breaks out. Maddox is sent over the top and grabs the post as Sandow is sent out. The near eliminations continue as Maddox saves himself again. For some reason Hunico tries a springboard and gets knocked out for his efforts. Steamboat is put out and Leakee is sent out after him.

We take a break and come back with Rotund eliminating Mahal, which saves Cannon at the same time. Maddox follows him out as the fans are behind Cannon. We're down to Woods, Rotund, Cannon, Raines, Rollins and Owens. Rollins is sent out in a hurry and Cannon clotheslines Owens out.

Woods and Cannon fight on the ropes while Raines and Rotundo do the same on some other ropes. Everyone heads to a corner until Woods starts going after Raines. The yet to be named Honor Roll misses Raines, who puts Woods out. Cannon dumps Rotundo but gets tossed by Raines for the win at 15:42.

Rating: D. This was just a battle royal and not a very good one. The problem is that the match didn't really age well as a lot of the names aren't that well known and we were never given a list of who was in there, meaning it was a lot of figuring it out as the match went on. It certainly wasn't great, though the fans stayed into it, which you have to expect in a match like this.

We've hit two big developmentals so let's head down to NXT for the next three matches.

NXT Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Eric Young vs. Samoa Joe

Date: October 30, 2016

Location: Palladium Theater, Los Angeles, California

Nakamura is defending and this is an NXT house show so no commentary, though it's shot like the TV show. Joe gets a nice pop, likely because he's from Los Angeles. Or because he's Samoa Joe. Nakamura on the other hand gets a roar and a superstar pop because he was still awesome at this point. If nothing else, it's cool to see the full Nakamura entrance again. After some Big Match Intros, we're ready to go.

Nakamura and Joe go nose to nose but Young breaks it up in what might not be his smartest move. Young locks up with Nakamura in the corner and gets the wavy arms treatment and a COME ON as Joe stands back and watches. Young yells at Joe instead and gets punched out to the floor, leaving us with the showdown the fans want to see. Joe works on a wristlock but Young pulls Nakamura outside and screams at him a lot.

Back in and Young hits Joe in the face, earning himself an enziguri in the corner. The Facewash makes it worse but Nakamura is back in for Good Vibrations on Joe. Young gets some much weaker Vibrations of his own but it's Joe coming in with the snap jabs. That's broken up again as Young takes Joe's place and the fans switch between TNA and SUPER ERIC chants.

Joe is back in and kicks the super out of Eric until Nakamura comes back in, meaning it's Eric heading outside this time. The knees in the corner rock Joe but he's fine enough to powerslam the returning Young for two. The STF into the Crossface requires a save from Nakamura but Joe blocks the reverse exploder. Young is back up with a belly to back suplex and the top rope elbow for two on Nakamura, though the fans weren't exactly buying the near fall.

Nakamura gets caught on top but is fine enough to reverse the MuscleBuster into a sunset flip. Joe isn't happy with being countered and Rock Bottoms Nakamura out of the corner, setting up the non-finishing version of the Koquina Clutch. The backflip rollup gets Nakamura out of

trouble and it's the middle rope knee for Young. With Joe knocked outside, Kinshasa to Young retains the title at 15:07.

Rating: B-. This was straight out of the triple threat playbook with two in and one out for the most part but it still worked well. What mattered here was giving the fans the thrill of seeing Nakamura and Joe while Young was there to take the fall. I don't think anyone ever really bought the title as being in jeopardy and that isn't surprising given where this was and the kind of audience they were in front of. Still good though and it's cool to see a different version of NXT.

Post match Nakamura and Joe go nose to nose but Joe leaves so Nakamura can celebrate for a good while. Nakamura thanks the fans to wrap it up.

Bobby Roode vs. Kota Ibushi

Date: October 30, 2016

Location: Palladium Theater, Los Angeles, California

Same show obviously so no commentary again. Roode gets quite the reception here (duh) but Ibushi gets the "oh dang we're really seeing this guy" reaction. Just because he can, Roode throws his robe on the ring announcer's face. They circle each other to start but Roode hits the GLORIOUS pose to offer some frustration. Roode takes him down and does the pose again as they're taking their time to start here.

A shoulder puts Ibushi down and we hit the BEER! MONEY! Chants. Ibushi knocks him outside and strikes his own GLORIOUS pose, which is just too far for Roode (it's all he's got so you have to protect it). That just earns him a hurricanrana to the floor but Roode breaks up a springboard attempt to put Ibushi on the floor. The referee starts the count and EGADS I had forgotten how annoying the "fans count ten on every count" thing was.

Back in and Roode drops a knee to the face, followed by a middle rope elbow to the back of the neck. As usual, Roode doesn't do anything flashy but he does it so efficiently that it works. A big clothesline takes Ibushi down and we hit the chinlock. That's broken up through the power of CHINLOCKS CAUSE COMEBACKS and it's time for the slugout, with Ibushi hitting a dropkick for the double knockdown.

Some kicks to the chest drop Roode and it's the running shooting star press for two. A springboard missile dropkick sends Roode outside and that's just not a good place to be. The perfect springboard moonsault takes him down again with the fans insisting that Roode didn't make the count back in. Speaking of back in, they head back in and Roode grabs a heck of a spinebuster for two. Fans: "THIS IS GLORIOUS!"

A rollup with feet on the ropes gives Roode two but Ibushi is right back with the sitout Last Ride for the same. The fans want them to fight forever because apparently they have that much time to watch these two kill each other. The Phoenix splash misses though and Roode drops him with the Glorious DDT for the pin at 16:14.

Rating: B. I liked this one better than the triple threat as Roode is so efficient in the ring and took Ibushi's high flying down through better technique and relying on what worked for him. I know Roode isn't the most consistent performer but the more I watch him, the more I can see what people find appealing about him. He's not going to get the big push, but he's perfect for something like this or a midcard push somewhere down the line.

We'll head to the UK to wrap it up.

United Kingdom Title: Pete Dunne vs. Mark Andrews

Date: June 8, 2017

Location: Brighton Centre, Brighton, England

Dunne is defending and there is no commentary again. This is shot differently though as it's one or two handheld cameras, meaning we keep seeing shots running around the ring to get a better angle. It's so strange to see that on a WWE show. They fight over the arm to start until Dunne takes him down and cranks on the leg. Just to show off a bit, Dunne pulls on the arm at the same time.

A rope grab gets Andrews out of trouble and it's a basement dropkick to put Dunne on the floor. That's a very bad idea as he forearm the heck out of Andrews and cranks on the arm again. We run around the ring to get a shot of Dunne stomping away in the corner and then working on a hammerlock. There's a stomp to the arm and the BRUISERWEIGHT chants

continue.

Andrews' legs are fine enough for a hurricanrana to the floor, setting up the big running flip dive. Back in and Andrews hits a jumping double stomp to the ribs but Dunne shrugs off the forearms. A tornado DDT works a bit better for Andrews but Dunne is right back up with kicks to the head. The slugout is on with Dunne getting the better of it, only to have the X Plex countered into a hurricanrana. Stundog Millionaire rocks Dunne again but Fall To Pieces misses. The Bitter End retains the title at 9:38.

Rating: C+. They were working but I don't think anyone was buying the idea of Andrews as a threat to the title. Dunne had only been champion for a few weeks at this point so he wasn't losing here. Andrews is the kind of high flier who can get the fans behind him but Dunne is a different kind of wrestler and not losing in this spot.

Overall Rating: C. This was a total mixed bag with all kinds of matches up and down the list. Developmental is a different world from the main roster as you get to see these people trying and seeing what they can do without all of the restrictions that the main roster puts on them. It makes for some fun matches and situations as these shows have their own worlds and continuities. I had a good time with this, though the matches were all over the place both in star power and quality.

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