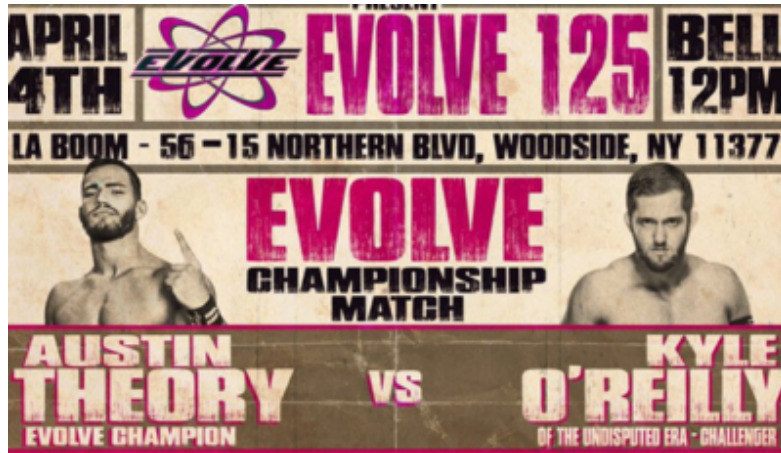


Evolve 125: It Took Some Time



IMG Credit: World Wrestling Network

Evolve 125

Date: April 4, 2019

Location: La Boom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Lenny Leonard, Rob Niemi

This is another one of the shows that I was hoping to see last year but for one reason or another it never happened. That's where a free month of Club WWN (plus the company putting the show up for free on YouTube) can be handy and that's why I'm here today. This show seemed to be pretty well received so hopefully it holds up. Let's get to it.

As usual, I have no idea what is coming or what is going on here so bare with me if I miss a plot point.

The commentators/hosts are in the ring to welcome us to the show. They run down the card, just in case someone wandered in here off the street thinking it was a store that sold farmer's almanacs. Cue Adrian Jaoude (also of NXT) to interrupt, saying he's here to fight.

Harlem Bravado vs. Adrian Jaoude

Jaoude takes him down with ease to start and Bravado bails to the rope in a hurry. Bravado stomps away instead and hits a leg trap suplex for two. The chinlock keeps Jaoude down and it's a Death Valley Driver to give

Bravado two more. Bravado starts talking trash though and gets his fingers snapped back. The hand gets slammed down onto the mat and a hard German suplex drops Bravado. A spinning kick to the face makes it even worse, followed by a quick kneebar to make Bravado tap at 5:00.

Rating: C-. Just a quick match to get things going and Jaoude looked good as the monster who can take you apart with the martial arts skills. I've liked his stuff in NXT and while Bravado looked fine, they made a big deal out of his start and stop success. That seems to be part of a long running story for him and if so, this would seem to play into it well enough.

Kazusada Higuchi vs. Curt Stallion

Higuchi seems to be a big time guest star. They take turns stretching to start and the much smaller Stallion makes himself scream a bit. Higuchi powers him into the corner for a friendly pat to the chest and it's time to work on Stallion's arm. The wristlock into the hammerlock has Stallion screaming even more, so he fails at a shoulder block instead. Higuchi's shoulder sends Stallion bailing to the floor for a breather.

That means Higuchi gets to follow and chop away, followed by a shot to block Stallion's suicide dive. It's been one sided so far as Stallion can't get around the size and power. Back in and more chops keep Stallion down but he pops back up with an abdominal stretch to to slow Higuchi for the first time. Actually make it an Octopus Hold but Higuchi is in the ropes in a hurry.

A German suplex takes care of Stallion again (Fan: "STAY DOWN!") but he's right back up with his own bridging German suplex for two. Stallion hits a running dropkick in the corner and a DDT gets two more. For some reason Stallion is willing to chop it out again, which goes as well as you might have expected. He even asks Higuchi to chop him and that's actually makes things worse.

This time though Stallion comes back with a knee to the chest, only to get chopped down again. A running powerslam gives Higuchi two more but Stallion grabs White Noise onto the knee for his own near fall. Stallion's headbutt connects for another two but he misses a top rope

splash. Higuchi grabs a Doctor Bomb for the pin at 11:21.

Rating: C. The fact that Higuchi had a WWN Title match the next day should have told you everything you needed to know about this one. It's not a great match or anything but it was kind of entertaining to see Higuchi destroy the much smaller Stallion. Higuchi wasn't flashy but he was intimidating and looked powerful so there was something to him. He would have a better match the next day too.

Post match Stallion gets an ovation. It wasn't that good of a match.

We look at Josh Briggs beating AR Fox but hurting himself in the process. He was taken out on a stretcher and wound up with a dislocated hip.

Here's Briggs, on crutches, for a chat. A few weeks ago, he wasn't sure if he was going to walk again, let alone wrestle, but the fans made him believe that the doctor's words didn't matter. They weren't sure how they were going to get out of the building but then the fans parted like the Red Sea and let him get out for medical treatment. Briggs appreciates the fans more than they will ever know but he promises to win the Evolve Title when (yes when) he comes back.

Cue Evolve Champion Austin Theory to mock Briggs for coming back, just so he can hear the fans chant his name. Theory kicks the crutch out and mocks Briggs' limping...but Briggs stands up. Theory turns around and walks right into a chokeslam to end a good segment. Well lucky for Briggs as he didn't know Theory would come out but still good enough.

John Silver/Alex Reynolds vs. AR Fox/Leon Ruff

Silver and Reynolds are now in the Dark Order in AEW so this company probably had a lot to do with getting them jobs there. Hold on though as Fox and Ruff have to dance with the entourage before we're ready to go. Reynolds works on Fox's arm to start but Fox flips over and dances some more. Back up and they both miss a bunch of clotheslines but Fox gets one off a backslide.

Fox blocks an RKO attempt and grabs a Codebreaker, allowing Ruff to slingshot in for an elbow to the back. Silver comes in and flips into a

choke on Ruff, who slips out for a screaming headlock. A one armed gorilla press has Ruff in trouble but he armdrags his way out without much trouble. Ruff's multiple springboards armdrag sends Silver outside for a top rope flip dive, with Ruff sticking the landing of course.

Reynolds breaks up a suicide dive though and it's Ruff in trouble for a change, including a snap suplex to give Reynolds two. A double flipping faceplant gets two on Ruff and it's back to Silver for some crossface shots to the face into the reverse chinlock. Ruff fights up and manages a hurricanrana to send Silver into Reynolds, meaning it's off to Fox to clean house.

A Thesz press lets Fox hammer away on Silver and there's a rolling cutter to drop him again. Fox hits a big no hands dive onto Reynolds and Coast to Coast...well it grazes Silver for two at least. Reynolds gets a blind tag though and superkicks Fox for two. Silver and Reynolds hit a powerbomb/Rough Ryder combination for two with Ruff having to make the save.

Fox grabs a double cutter on Silver and Reynolds but they're right back with a series of kicks to the head. Everyone winds up in the same corner and it's Fox superplexing Silver, followed by Lo Mein Pain (springboard Spanish Fly). Ruff's Swanton sets up For's 450 to finish Reynolds at 15:48.

Rating: B-. Solid back and forth match here with everyone getting a chance to show off a bit. Fox looks like the established star and comes off like one of the legends around here (appropriate, as that is the case) and Ruff isn't bad either. Silver and Reynolds got to showcase themselves as well and I can understand how AEW saw something in them, even in limited rolls.

Post match, Fox, Ruff and company dance some more.

Darby Allin vs. Anthony Henry

Priscilla Kelly is with Allin and there must be a winner. Henry's face is half painted ala Darby's (albeit the other side for a change of pace), making me think they had mixed up the graphics for a bit. The fans are

WAY behind Allin here and Henry bails straight to the floor to start. You don't do that to Allin, who hits a suicide dive into the barricade. Back in and the Coffin Drop is blocked but Allin flips out of a German suplex and armdrags Henry to the floor. Now the suicide dive can connect so it's time to fight into the crowd.

Henry drops him ribs first onto the barricade and adds a running double stomp to the back. They get back in with Allin grabbing a brainbuster for a quick double down. Back up and they slug it out with Henry hitting a TKO across the top rope. Allin is back in for a pinfall reversal sequence but he can't get the Last Supper. A TKO Stunner plants Allin so a Jackknife cover can get two. Henry talks a lot of trash though and gets caught with the flipping Stunner. That's fine with Henry, who kicks him in the head and stomps away at the head for the referee stoppage at 7:22.

Rating: B-. You really can see the star power in Allin, though the fans kind of died on the finish there. Allin comes off as a star and I'm not sure why you would have him lose here. This felt like the ending to a big feud and with Allin being advertised for a match tomorrow, it's a rather confusing ending. At least they beat each other up rather well and it felt like a violent match, which is what it should have been given the story they built up.

Post match Henry leaves but here's Brandi Lauren to jump Kelly to set up their mixed tag match tomorrow.

Referees help Allin stagger to the back.

Angelo Dawkins vs. Colby Corino

Corino is part of the Unwanted and the Street Profits get a huge reaction (NXT and Evolve have a working relationship in case you're REALLY confused right now). Montez Ford cracks up at the idea that he's fighting someone as small as Corino and promises to take care of the rest of the Unwanted if they show up.

Corino's slap is swatted away so Dawkins hits a release gutwrench suplex. Dawkins isn't done and picks him up for a big swing before the second toss. A kick to the head out of the corner staggers Dawkins and a Meteora

puts him down. Some running forearms in the corner don't do Corino much good though as he gets suplexed again for his efforts. A toss spinebuster finishes Corino at 2:26, as it should have.

Post match Dawkins asks if that's all there is. If anyone from the Unwanted wants a shot, come get him. Cue WWN Champion JD Drake (not part of the Unwanted) to say the Unwanted isn't coming out when someone is waiting on them. Drake is here to fight though so let's have a title match right now.

WWN Title: Angelo Dawkins vs. JD Drake

Drake is defending. They shake hands to start but Drake hits a chop, with Dawkins being glad to reciprocate. Dawkins hits a dropkick and some running elbows in the corner put Drake on the floor early on. Another chop off goes to Drake and he runs Dawkins over to impress the fans. More chops have Dawkins in more trouble, including even more to knock him down. A headbutt gives Drake two and a sliding lariat is good for the same as the pace has slowed a bit.

Dawkins fights back up with some hard shoulders, setting up the spinning splash in the corner. A bulldog gets two and a spear is good for the same but Dawkins can't follow up. Back up and Drake manages a German suplex but Dawkins pops up and shouts. That earns him a Drill Bit for two, so Drake asks why Dawkins won't die. Drake puts him on top but gets pulled down with a super spinebuster for two more. Dawkins' chops just annoy Drake and he cuts Dawkins off with a knee. A Stunner sets up a Cannonball and Drake's moonsault retains the title at 10:30.

Rating: B-. Not too bad here for an impromptu face vs. face match. They beat each other up well enough here and it's not like a tag wrestler losing in a singles match is going to do any real damage to him. Drake gets an impressive looking win and you can tell that he means a lot to the fans here. The Street Profits had a nice run in Evolve and it helped turn them into a better team. Now imagine that: getting out and learning from someone else can help young talent get better.

Respect is shown post match.

Video on the Ten Year Anniversary show, which was pretty good.

Cue Stokely Hathaway (legendary manager, now known as Malcolm Bivens in NXT) to say he hasn't been released. No he isn't back tonight because the only way he could have come back was to be put into the main event tonight. That was shot down so instead he's here to say goodbye. Last year he went to Axxess and now he has been signed by NXT and it would not have happened if not for Evolve. Since he'll be gone soon, he wanted to say goodbye and thank you. Nice moment here and you can tell Hathaway has a deep history around here.

Montez Ford vs. Shane Strickland

Strickland is also Unwanted and is now known as Isaiah Scott. Ford is more serious here and charges at Strickland in the corner to knock him outside. That means choking and forearms against the barricade but Strickland gets in a few chops. That's not cool with Ford who blocks a big chop and pounds Strickland down again. A sip of the red cup fires Ford up enough to hit the big flip dive and the fans are pleased.

Cue Colby Corino for a distraction though and Strickland pulls him into a modified Rings of Saturn. He even ties Ford's arms back with his legs and the fans chant GOLDBERG. Even commentary has to explain that by mentioning some pyro going off by mistake. Lenny: "If we're being honest, it probably would have been Gillberg." Back up and Strickland hits a running dropkick to the knee in the corner and it's off to more double arm cranking.

That's broken up as well so Strickland chops away but Ford gets in a few kicks and a standing moonsault is good for two. Strickland is fine enough to hit a 619 around the post and a hard powerbomb drops Ford again. Ford pops back up and blasts Strickland with a clothesline but snaps off a dropkick before the double knockdown. It's Strickland up first and slugging away, including taping up his fist.

Ford falls down though and the referee makes Strickland remove the tape. Strickland's hands are fine enough for a hard German suplex and the Swerve Stomp gets two. The comeback is on but Ford gets knocked hard off the top and down onto the apron. Back up and Ford hits a top rope

Fameasser with Strickland in the ropes. That and the huge frog splash is enough to give Ford the pin at 12:44.

Rating: C+. I like both of these guys (Strickland a lot) and again, it shows how much value there is to have these guys in a different promotion to learn something different. That isn't something that happens very often and I'm really not sure why. How many wrestling promotions would love to feature some NXT talent? Anyway, this was a hard hitting match but it never hit that next gear, leaving it as just pretty good instead of very good.

Tag Team Titles: Unwanted vs. Konosuke Takeshita/Mao Inoue

The Unwanted (Eddie Kingston/Joe Gacy) is defending and the challengers are from DDT. Takeshita (the DDT Champion) starts with Kingston and they go to the mat early on. That means an early standoff so Takeshita hits a forearm to send Kingston outside. Back in and a leg lariat sends Kingston into the corner so it's off to Mao vs. Gacy. An exchange of shoulders goes to the much bigger Gacy, who blocks a drop toehold without much effort.

Mao sends him outside and it's back in for both challengers to hammer away. That brings Kingston back in though and Mao gets double teamed for a change, including a big clothesline for two. The chinlock goes on for a bit and it's time to stomp away but Mao is back up with a running dropkick. A running leg lariat gets Mao out of trouble and it's the hot(tish) tag off to Takeshita. Kingston comes in as well and is quickly DDTed to the floor, where he pulls Takeshita with him.

Mao dives onto all three and frog splashes Kingston for two back inside. A split legged moonsault gets two more and there's a German suplex for the same with Gacy throwing Takeshita into the cover for the save. Kingston suplexes Takeshita but it's a pair of boots in the corner to take Kingston down. Mao adds the 450 for two but walks into a heck of a spinning kick from Gacy.

That just earns him a Blue Thunder Bomb to give Mao two but Gacy blasts Mao with a clothesline for the same. Mao Stuns Gacy, who is right back up with a discus forearm for two more. A nasty looking powerbomb/neckbreaker

combination gets two as everything stays broken down. Mao slugs away at both champions at once but it's a backdrop driver to give Gacy the retaining pin at 13:57.

Rating: B. I liked this one way more than I expected to as the DDT guys looked awesome at times. They played well against the hard hitting champions and I liked the whole thing rather well. The Unwanted has impressed me in the limited amount of time I've seen them and this was no exception. Good stuff here and probably the best match of the night so far.

Evolve Title: Austin Theory vs. Kyle O'Reilly

O'Reilly is challenging and yes he does play the air guitar on a belt without actually having a belt. Hold on though as both guys make sure to tell the ring announcer their various nicknames for the Big Match Intros. This includes Kyle dubbing himself the Sleazy Air Guitar Superstar, which of course gets a chant. Feeling out process to start with O'Reilly taking him down but Theory runs away from the threat of a big kick to the head.

Back up and O'Reilly grabs the leg again but can't get very far with it. A headlock takeover works better for O'Reilly and he does it again because he's from NXT and likes Takeovers. Theory can't suplex his way out of the headlock so he powers up, only to get taken down all over again. O'Reilly's mind games of just outmaneuvering Theory at every step is good stuff. The cross armbreaker sends Theory outside and that's good for a SLEAZY KYLE chant.

Back in and O'Reilly strikes him down without much trouble as Theory just can't get anything going so far. A kneebar sends Theory to the rope but he finally scores with a clothesline to get a breather. Theory's standing moonsault gets two and it's off to an arm trap chinlock. That doesn't last long though and Theory chops the heck out of him in the corner. A suplex gets two on O'Reilly and it's off to a different armbar.

O'Reilly fights up and rolls some butterfly DDTs to put them both down for a bit. The ankle lock doesn't last long so O'Reilly suplexes him for two more. Theory is back with a buckle bomb but they trade kicks to the face. A kneebar slows Theory down and O'Reilly kicks him in the chest so

hard that he sends himself outside. They slug it out again and, after staggering a bit, Theory rocks him enough for Three Seconds Around The World (spinning torture rack bomb).

2K1 (leg trap brainbuster) gets two more on O'Reilly but he takes the knee again. Theory dives for the rope and needs a little walk around the ring. This includes picking up the title and walking away but O'Reilly pulls him back inside. The brainbuster gives O'Reilly two and we hit the ankle lock. Theory gets out again and hits a DDT onto the belt for two, followed Attaksia for the pin to retain at 20:15.

Rating: B. I had a good time with this one and there were times where you believed that the title could change hands. That's not something you get in showdown matches like this so well done with both guys. What matters here though is giving Theory another line on his resume. It means something to have beaten a big name from NXT so it's a positive deal for everyone here, as O'Reilly gets a good match and can go right back to NXT's tag division while pointing to the DDT on the belt. Good main event here and it felt like a bit deal.

Post match Theory jumps O'Reilly but Bobby Fish and Roderick Strong run in for the save. Fish talks about how he and O'Reilly started Evolve (in the first main event) and they will step in when needed. O'Reilly liked that Theory (which he pronounces as Tuh-hear-e) used the title and promises that the Undisputed Era will be back.

Overall Rating: B. This was a fun and entertaining show which never dragged in the slightest. The more I watch of Evolve the more I think I could get into it. You can tell that there are intricate stories throughout the company and a lot of history between the people. It wasn't exactly on display here, but they did enough to make me interested in seeing more. Well done here and a show worth checking out if you get the time (it's available for free on their YouTube page).

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