

Final Battle 2020: I Understand

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Date: December 18, 2020

Location: UMBC Events Center, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Caprice Coleman

This is the biggest show of the year and this is one of the more uniquely put together pay per views I've seen in a long time. The company has only been back for a short while now and a lot of the top stars have not been around since the relaunch. The card is still pretty full though and maybe they can pull off a good one. Let's get to it.

Commentary welcomes us to the pre-show and has some bad news: EC3, Kenny King and Bandido have been Coronavirused off the show so some things have to be changed.

Pre-Show: Tony Deppen vs. LSG vs. Josh Woods vs. Dak Draper

One fall to a finish, lucha rules and the winner gets a TV Title match later tonight. Deppen and LSG are thrown outside before the bell so it's Woods vs. Draper to start things off. The other two get back on the apron as Woods and Draper go to the grappling to start. An exchange of headlocks doesn't go anywhere so LSG tags himself in to dropkick Draper.

Deppen comes in as well and it's time to run the ropes with LSG. A dropkick puts LSG down but he sends Deppen outside for a dropkick through the ropes. That means Woods and Draper can come back in to exchange rollups for two each but Draper knocks Deppen into the corner with a shot to the face. A suplex gives Draper two but the Magnum KO is broken up with some elbows to the jaw.

Deppen gets tossed around and Draper gets in some trash talk

to Woods to draw him in. That doesn't even matter this time as Draper muscles Deppen up for an apron superplex and another near fall. The running knee misses though and Deppen gets out to the floor, allowing LSG to come back in and strike away.

A springboard forearm to the face gets two on Draper but Deppen is back in with a springboard Codebreaker to Woods. Draper and LSG go to the corner, only to have Woods come back in for a Tower of Doom. That means Draper and Woods can slug it out until Draper grabs a Doctor Bomb for two. They're knocked outside though and it's Deppen jumping back in to roll LSG up for the pin at 11:43.

Rating: C+. This was all about the action and that's a good way to get things going on a show like this one. It's exactly the same idea of the cruiserweights back in WCW and it is always going to work here. Deppen winning is a bit of a surprise, but that's the kind of thing you can get away with in a four way like this. Nice stuff to get us going.

Pre-Show: Foundation vs. Fred Yehi/Wheeler Yuta

It's the first ever Pure Rules tag match, you have five seconds to get out of the ring after the tag and a save counts as a rope break. If you make a save when you are out of breaks, it's a DQ. Tracy Williams and Rhett Titus are here for the Foundation. Yehi and Williams go with the grappling to start with Williams wristlocking him into the corner for the tag off to Titus.

Yehi takes him down into the Koji Clutch but the rope is reached in a hurry for the first break. Yuta comes in and Williams pulls him straight into the Texas Cloverleaf, sending Yuta to the ropes to even things up. We get some miscommunication on a tag so Yehi has the chance to come in and German suplex Williams. Titus comes in and gets caught in a Koji Clutch, with Williams making the save, good for the second rope break.

The rapid fire saves are on and we're down to just Yehi and Yuta having one left. Titus dropkicks Yuta off the top and out to the floor in a big crash. That means Williams and Yehi come in and strike it out, with Yehi having to counter a piledriver attempt. Yehi Downward Spirals him into the Koji Clutch and the ropes aren't there for a save. Titus can't save him either so he sends Yuta into the hold for the break in a smart move.

It's back to Titus vs. Yuta for an exchange of crucifixes for two each until Yuta snaps off a bridging German suplex for two more. Yehi gets in a shot of his own and Yuta's top rope splash gets another two. The hot tag brings in Williams for a hard clothesline and a Death Valley Driver. Williams stuffs Yuta with a piledriver and Yehi makes the save for the last break. Yuta gets caught in the Crossface, with Williams using the ropes for extra leverage (perfectly legal) for the tap at 13:51.

Rating: C. The rope breaks were a nice touch but that's about all there was to this. The Pure Rules are a nice idea but they aren't exactly the most inspiring alternative to everything else going on. Williams and Yehi continue to be fun to watch every time but the other two were just kind of there, which is kind of a problem when they do it almost every week.

Respect is shown post match.

The opening video talks about how everything stopped this year but some wrestlers are picking up the mantle of honor. Tonight they are willing to do whatever it takes on the biggest night of the year.

Tag Team Titles: Mark Briscoe/PCO vs. Foundation

The Foundation (Jay Lethal/Jonathan Gresham) are defending and PCO is here because Jay Briscoe was moved into another match due to Coronavirus issues, which wound up being changed anyway. We get the Code of Honor and it's Lethal vs. Briscoe to start things off, with Lethal saying this is wrestling

instead of fighting. Mark isn't having any of this wristlocking and starts chopping away, sending Lethal out to the floor for a breather.

Back in and it's PCO coming in to say he wants to break Lethal's arm (again). That's enough to make Lethal stay so PCO takes him down into a cross armbreaker. A rope break lets Lethal bail out to the floor as the champs can't get anything going so far. Gresham comes in and tries to go after PCO's leg, which goes as well as you would expect. PCO tosses him back to the floor and the challengers start cleaning house, including Briscoe's running cannonball off the apron to drop Lethal.

The champs are rammed into each other and Mark uses a chair as a launchpad for a flip dive over the corner onto everyone else. PCO's top rope flip dive completely misses Lethal so it's Mark suplexing Gresham for two. Lethal comes back in for a dropkick/German suplex combination to drop Briscoe and it's time to stomp him down into the corner. Briscoe pops back up and brings in PCO to clean house.

What looked like a low blow puts Gresham down again and the champs are in trouble. The Froggy Bow hits Lethal's raised knees as the PCOsault hits clean, allowing Lethal to make the save. PCO and Lethal slug it out until Gresham launches Lethal over for a cutter to hit PCO for two. The champs manage a Doomsday Device on PCO and Gresham's shooting star press gets a near fall. PCO monsters up but Lethal offers a distraction, allowing Gresham to roll PCO up and retain at 12:50.

Rating: B-. This was a good choice for an opener as PCO and Briscoe are always fun for a watch and the Foundation do feel like one of the best teams around. The Foundation vs. the Briscoes would have been better but there is only so much you can do when the pandemic is changing everything on such a short notice. Good match here though and the right result given the situation.

Commentary explains some of the card changes due to the Coronavirus.

Rey Horus vs. Dalton Castle

Horus was supposed to defend the Six Man Tag Team Titles but a change had to be made, with Castle, again with the Boys, stepped in. Castle goes with a fast rollup to start but gets kicked away to give us a standoff. Horus avoids a charge in the corner to put Castle on the floor as frustration sets in early. Back in and Castle takes him down for a quick splash, setting up some forearm to the ribs.

They head outside with Horus managing a kick to the chest, followed by a kick to the chest. Now the big flip dive connects and Castle is in even more trouble. Castle gets sent hard over the barricade and it's a running kick to the face to give Horus two. A tornado DDT gives Horus two more but Castle catches him on top. Something like a reverse Neutralizer gets two on Horus and there's a release German suplex for the same. Castle goes up but Horus runs the corner for a super victory roll and the pin at 9:10.

Rating: C. Castle's near downward spiral continues around here as now he's losing to the lesser known luchadors. The ending certainly took me by surprise, which is a nice thing in this case, as Horus gets a nice rub out of the whole thing. There was some good enough action, but it's one of those matches that is likely just going to come and go without making much impact.

We recap Matt Taven/Mike Bennett (OGK) vs. the Righteous. Taven and Vincent had been in the Kingdom but Vincent turned on him to strike out on his own. Then Taven went out of action for the better part of a year due to a knee injury. Now they're both back and it's time for the two of them to kill each other. Bennett and Bateman are here to make it a tag match.

OGK vs. Righteous

The Righteous has Vita VonStarr in their corner. The brawl is on in a hurry with Bennett saving Taven from a suplex and driving Vincent into the corner. Bateman gets in a cheap shot from behind and we settle down with Bateman driving Taven into the corner. That just earns him an enziguri and it's a hot tag to Bennett to clean house. Vita tries to come in for a distraction though and Bateman plans Bennett with a Side Effect to take over.

Vincent's running forearms in the corner have Bennett in more trouble and a spinning Russian legsweep gets two. Bateman comes back in with some shots to the face but it's too early for Vincent to try Redrum. Instead he slaps on the guillotine choke but Bennett powers out with a suplex. The double tag brings in Taven to clean house on Bateman, including a Russian legsweep into a flipping neckbreaker.

That's enough of that though as Taven heads outside and unloads on Vincent. A springboard shot to the face puts Bateman down again and Just The Tip connects. The Climax is broken up though and Vincent slingshots in, only to get caught in a backbreaker. Bateman runs Taven over again though and it's Redrum (Swanton) connecting for two. Bennett makes the save and everyone is down again. Taven and Vincent get into the big brawl that they have been needing to have but they kick each other down.

That's good for a double tag so Bennett can spear Bateman down. The spike piledriver connects but Taven's knee gives out again, meaning no cover. Instead Bennett punches Bateman off the top for a crash to the apron. A Death Valley Driver onto the apron drops Bateman again as Taven is back up with a knee to Vincent. The Aurora Borealis (frog splash) hits knees but Taven pulls Vincent into a choke, sending Vincent over to the rope. Bennett is back up though and Vincent is held over the apron for Aurora Borealis to crush him again. Back in and a

Backpack Stunner/running boot combination finishes Bateman at 16:20.

Rating: B. This was the first match that felt like something that belonged on the pay per view (save for maybe the opener) as Taven vs. Vincent has become a heck of a feud. Bennett already feels FAR more important here than he ever did in WWE and that's great for him. Bateman is a good monster enforcer as well and the match worked out rather well. I still can't get my head around how much better Taven is as a face. It's nothing I ever would have bet on and this has been working rather well. Good match here, with everyone looking solid.

Post match Vita hits OGK with a double low blow and it's time to zip tie Taven to the ropes. Vita headscissors Taven to make him watch as Bateman puts a board between Bennett's feet. A chair shot crushes the ankle in a Misery style destruction.

Danhausen vs. Brian Johnson

If Danhausen (who apparently debuted September 13, 1993 at 12:37am and weighs "at least" 300lbs despite being rather skinny) wins, he gets a contract. They shake hands and Danhausen kicks him in the face for a very early two. A middle rope hurricanrana gets two on Johnson and Danhausen demands his music be played. That's what he gets as he hits a running kick off the apron, only to get caught with a hanging cutter back inside.

Johnson isn't pleased but he grabs a mic and says Caprice Coleman sucks at his job. The trash talk and stomping ensues and Johnson wants to know why the Honor Club Girls aren't cheering for him. A slam into a fist drop gets two on Danhausen but he takes the mat and drives Johnson into the corner for swearing (a big negative in Danhausen's eyes). Johnson clotheslines him down again though and it's time to grab the microphone again.

More shouting ensues as Johnson isn't happy that he finally

made it to Final Battle and is being stuck doing this. A clothesline gets two and Johnson can't believe it. Danhausen makes the comeback with a running shot in the corner and a German suplex into another German suplex gets two...and let's grab a jar of teeth. The Goodnight Hausen (GTS) gets two as Johnson gets a hand on the rope.

Johnson bails to the floor and gets taken down with a suicide dive but Johnson kicks the rope on the way back in. The jar of teeth (just go with it) is poured into Danhausen's mouth but he grabs a quick rollup for two anyway. The teeth go into the referee's eyes though, meaning there is no cover off Johnson's neckbreaker finisher. Danhausen grabs the microphone, hits himself with the head with it (for the noise), and hands it to Johnson...which is enough for the DQ at 8:44.

Rating: C+. I actually liked this as Danhausen is enough of a screwy guy to make you believe that he's just kind of out there. They didn't do anything too far here (the teeth are certainly a thing) and Johnson ran his mouth so much that you wanted to see him lose. This was much more about the angle than the wrestling and that's fine in a match like this, though I could see people not being pleased.

TV Title: Dragon Lee vs. Tony Deppen

Deppen is challenging after winning a four way on the pre-show but comes in holding his neck. Amy Rose, the manager of Lee's faction, joins commentary. They go to the mat to start with neither being able to get much of an advantage. Deppen grabs an armdrag but gets sent to the floor for the suicide dive. Back in and Lee chops away in the corner as Rose is speaking about 90% Spanish. Deppen manages a step up kick to the head to put Lee on the floor, setting up a suicide flip dive. A springboard missile dropkick gives Deppen two but Lee pounds him right down in the corner.

We hit the chinlock for a bit, with Deppen fighting up and

slapping away to take over. Lee is back with the snap German suplex and a moonsault northern lights suplex (geez) which leaves both of them down. They slug it out from their knees with Lee getting the better of things, only to miss a charge in the corner.

Deppen loads up a superplex but gets knocked down for an Alberto double stomp. Back up and Deppen scores with a running knee to the face and the kickout leaves him shocked. Lee blasts him in the face though and his own running knee gets two. That's enough for Lee, who hits Incineration (another running knee) to retain at 11:50.

Rating: C+. Lee's offense is fast paced and exciting enough that it is easy to see why Ring of Honor wants to push the heck out of him. Deppen looked good here as well, as he made the most out of the opportunity he was given. The match wasn't exactly in doubt but they made something out of very little so well done all things considered.

We look at Jay Briscoe and Shane Taylor arguing backstage because their matches with EC3 and Mexisquad were canceled. This was announced earlier in the night and while that's not a great way to go, like so many other things on this show, what else are they supposed to do?

Jay Briscoe vs. Shane Taylor

The lockup doesn't go anywhere as they shove each other around with little avail. Shane sends him into the corner and unloads with rights and lefts but Jay is right back with a headlock. Jay tries to run the ropes and is knocked down hard with a shoulder. More rights and lefts set up a big right hand to knock Jay silly, meaning it's time to head to the floor.

Jay sends him into the barricade and scores with a good superkick before heading back inside. Shane slugs away again but gets caught with a dropkick. One heck of a right hand drops Jay again though and it's time for a slugout. Jay's snap jabs

set up an impressive Death Valley Driver and here's Mark Briscoe for support.

Shane is up first but Jay slaps on a choke to put Shane down. Two arm drops have Shane in real trouble but he makes it over to the rope for the break. Jay's big clothesline gets two and the neckbreaker is good for the same. Shane is back up and hits him in the face, setting up the package piledriver. Welcome To The Land finishes Jay at 13:41.

Rating: B-. This was about hitting each other really hard but also about building Shane up as a main eventer. They had a good power brawl here and beating Jay still means quite a bit in Ring of Honor. They don't have many people at that level or even close to it so giving Shane a win on a show like this means a lot for his future around here.

We recap Jonathan Gresham defending the Pure Title against Flip Gordon. Gresham is the first holder of the new version of the title and he says there is more to wrestling than flips. Gordon doesn't love this company as much as he does and it's time for both guys to prove themselves.

Pure Title: Jonathan Gresham vs. Flip Gordon

Gordon is challenging. They lock up to start with Ian saying this is like Thunder Road vs. Born To Run. Gresham grabs a hammerlock, which sends Gordon straight to the rope for the first break. With that out of the way, Gresham takes him to the mat to work on the leg, which sends Gordon over to the ropes for a second break in three minutes. Gresham tries a headlock takeover this time before switching to a crucifix.

Back up and Gresham works on the wrist a bit more as Gordon has barely done anything so far. Gresham ties up the arm and twists the foot around at the same time before letting Gordon up. A standing armbar goes on so Gordon drives him into the rope, which counts as the final rope break. Gordon finally scores with a spinning kick to the head to put Gresham down

for the first time.

Gresham can't hit a springboard hurricanrana so Gordon superkicks him down for two, with Gresham using a rope break of his own. Gordon gets knocked away but is fine enough to duck a middle rope crossbody with Gresham banging up his knee on the landing. That gives Gordon a target and the Figure Four goes on, with Gresham breaking it up in a hurry. A dropkick to the leg sets up a half crab but Gresham slips out again. This time Gresham kicks Gordon in the arm and they're both down for a bit.

Gordon is right back on the leg so Gresham makes the rope for the second time. Another kick to the leg sets up a Falcon Arrow into Submit To Flip (STF) but Gresham elbows his way out. Back up and they slug it out with Gresham kicking him in the arm again. Gordon wins a slugout by going with the closed fist, which is good for his first warning. An enziguri into a German suplex (with Gresham raising the bad leg) gets two on Gordon but he knocks the leg out again and grabs another half crab.

That's switched into another STF but Gresham crawls to the floor for the break. Back in and Gresham sets him on top for another kick to the arm, setting up a top rope belly to back superplex for another near fall. Gresham hits a running shot to the head for two, followed by a running shot to the head for two. Another one is loaded up but the referee stops it because Gordon can't defend himself at 24:37.

Rating: B. I'm not wild on Gordon most of the time but he brought it here and they had a heck of a fight. Gresham was losing the technical battle, or at least close to it, and went with the hard shots to the head to win instead. It's a good story for the match and Gresham didn't cheat to win after a long match, making this one of the better things the Pure Title has done since it was brought back. Heck of a match here and pay per view worthy.

Post match Gordon declines the handshake and walks away.

We recap Brody King vs. Rush. King has been on a roll since Ring of Honor returned and Rush is finally back after his long hiatus. It isn't much of a main event, but again you can't hold that against them here.

Ring of Honor World Title: Rush vs. Brody King

King is challenging. They go with the striking to start with Rush's shoulder putting him on a knee. King is back up with a clothesline to the floor and that means the suicide dive. Rush is whipped hard into the barricade twice in a row, meaning it's time to grab some chairs. King slams him down onto said chairs, which isn't a DQ because they weren't used in an offensive manner. There's a backsplash onto Rush onto the chairs and it's time to go back inside.

King stomps away in the corner and hits the Cannonball for two, only to have Rush come back with a running knee to the face. They're right back to the floor with Rush sending him into the barricade and slamming the door in the barricade on King's head. Rush whips away with an electrical cord and then uses it to choke away. King is down so Rush asks the camera if it missed being in his house.

Back in and King unloads with chops in the corner, only to get taken down for his efforts. The running taunting kick to the face has King in more trouble and there's a belly to belly to put King into the corner again. King heads up top but Rush catches him with a top rope superplex for two more.

The swinging Boss Man Slam gives King two and it's time to chop it out again. Rush knocks him into the corner again and tries the Bull's Horns, only to get cut off by a spear. The Ganso Bomb is loaded up but here is Dragon Lee (Rush's brother) for a distraction. Bestia del Rey (Rush/Lee's father) comes in to chair King down, meaning the Bull's Horns to retain the title at 16:35.

Rating: B. Pretty good brawl here with both guys hitting each other rather hard. The ending seemed designed to set up something for later, though I'm not sure I can imagine Rush keeping the title that much longer due to the immigration issues. King does have a claim to a rematch due to the cheating but I'm not sure if he'll be first in line. I know this didn't quite feel like a Final Battle main event, but as has been the case all night, it's understandable.

Post break La Faccion celebrates but the Foundation comes out for the staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. All things considered, this is the about all you could have asked for. I know the show was lacking a lot of the way of storyline development, but there was only so much they could have done. It felt more like a collection of matches than a show if that makes sense, though it's quite the collection of matches for the most part. Nothing is bad, and I liked what we got here for the most part. Ring of Honor works best when they're just focusing on the wrestling and that's what they did here in a show that felt like it belonged on the Final Battle stage.

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