

WrestleDream 2023 Preview

So here we have WrestleDream, which is a show designed to honor the passing of Antonio Inoki one year ago. Therefore it's another AEW show with New Japan guest stars, though New Japan is running a big show of its own on the same day so the visiting stars are limited. There is some good stuff on the card though and hopefully that's enough to carry it. Let's get to it.

Zero Hour: Nick Wayne vs. Luchasaurus

This is a side story from Darby Allin vs. Christian Cage as both have interfered in the other feud. It's a speed vs. power match and that is something that can work under almost any circumstances. AEW really seems interested in pushing Wayne every chance they can these days but at some point he is going to need to win something. I'm just not sure he gets to do it here.

I'll go with Luchasaurus to win here as he's coming off the TNT Title reign and isn't likely to lose to someone with so little experience on this level. I'm sure Wayne will get a bunch of stuff in and get to showcase himself again but that doesn't mean he's going to win. Hopefully Wayne gets to throw everything he has at Luchasaurus, but he'll fall short in the end.

Zero Hour: Trios Titles: Acclaimed/Billy Gunn(c) vs. TMDK

This is the first New Japan match on the show and in this case it was built up as "whoever wins the title match on Rampage defends against TMDK tomorrow night". That's not exactly a thrilling story but it's a way to get the titles on the show. Thankfully in this case it's just on Zero Hour, meaning it won't extend the show with a match that has very little in the way of drama.

Of course the champions retain here, as a group of guest stars aren't going to be the ones to end the reign that is bringing the Acclaimed and the Gunns back to prominence. The (arguably) good thing about these titles is you can throw any three challenges out there and have a title match. That's more or less what they've done here, though at least it's a regular team from New Japan.

Zero Hour: Claudio Castagnoli vs. Josh Barnett

So this was added the night before the show as the result of a Castagnoli open challenge. Barnett has never wrestled for AEW before but does have experience in Japan so here we are. That makes for a tricky preview because there isn't any kind of a story going into the match, and Barnett being a complete stranger around here makes it even more complicated.

Since Barnett is not likely to stick around, I'll go with Castagnoli to win as there isn't much of a reason to do anything else. Castagnoli needs a big win coming off his loss to Eddie Kingston and while this won't be some kind of a game changer for him, it should be enough to give him a boost. I'm not sure why this match needed to be added, though more Castagnoli is often a good thing.

Zero Hour: Shane Taylor/Lee Moriarty/Diamante/Mercedes Martinez vs. Satoshi Kojima/Keith Lee/Athena/Billie Starkz

This is another match added during the Collision because MORE MEANS GOOD. There are a few people with some history here but a good chunk of it has been in Ring Of Honor. Taylor seems to be one of the new flavors of the month for AEW and it makes sense that they would want to get him out there in front of people as often as possible. Throw in Lee and this could be a lot worse.

Give me Lee and company to win, as Moriarty being thrown half a mile by Lee would be a good way to get the show going. Other than that, there is always the chance of Athena beating

Martinez or Diamante. Either way, there are going to be a bunch of people in this match and there is a good chance that a lot of them are not going to be able to get in that much ring time.

TBS Title: Kris Statlander(c) vs. Julia Hart

Statlander has been a mostly dominant champion in her still relatively short title reign, but Hart has caught fire in recent weeks and suddenly feels like she could be a major threat to the title. The good thing here is that you are seeing two mostly fresh women in the title scene, which is what AEW has been needing for a very long time now. In other words, there isn't a bad option for a winner here.

I think I'll actually take Hart to win the title, as it would be very deflating for her to lose after the big push that she has gotten in the last few weeks. Granted that might have been just to make her feel like a threat, but the House of Black needs to get something back after losing the Trios Titles, so this would be a nice fit to help get them on track. I'm not sure what is next for Statlander, but I'm thinking she should lose here.

Ricky Starks vs. Wheeler Yuta

This was thrown onto the card earlier in the week as Yuta doesn't like how Starks has been going after Bryan Danielson. Starks has been on a roll as of late without winning much of anything, which leaves him in a weird place. Granted that is kind of why you put someone like Yuta in this spot as he could go a long way with making Starks look like a bigger deal after his losses.

I'll go with Starks to win here, as there is little reason for Yuta to win. His role in the Blackpool Combat Club is to put up a good fight in defeat and that is what he'll be doing here. Starks is red hot and for someone who keeps losing so giving him a win here would be the right way to go. They'll

have a good match, but at the end of the day, Starks needs this way more than Yuta.

Young Bucks vs. The Gunns vs. Lucha Bros vs. Orange Cassidy/Hook

For a future AEW Tag Team Title shot, which sounds a bit like a Money In The Bank deal. We'll start with getting rid of Cassidy and Hook, who are a fun team, but I can't imagine they actually get put into the title picture so soon. That leaves a few options, and I could picture any of the three getting the shot. It's nice to have options here, and unfortunately none of them really stand out.

While the Bucks would be the interesting way to go, I'll take the Gunns getting the win here. FTR vs. the Lucha Bros doesn't sound like it would be the most engaging match and the Bucks vs. FTR has been done so many times now. Go with FTR vs. the Gunns, which does have a history but hasn't been hammered into the ground. This is going to be the "everyone flies all over the place" match and it should be entertaining enough. Just don't do the Money In The Bank deal, please.

AEW Tag Team Titles: FTR(c) vs. Aussie Open

This one is a little more interesting as I could see the titles changing hands. Aussie Open has come a long way and established themselves as one of the better teams in AEW at the moment. That means they can be put into this spot for a shot at the best team around without much trouble. The teams have even traded some promos to hype things up even more and so far, they've done their jobs.

With that being said, for the life of me I can't imagine FTR losing the belts They can have good to great matches with just about any team and it would feel like a waste to take away that option, especially with them frequenting Collision. The Aussies will give them one heck of a run for their money, but FTR comes out on top of this by retaining the titles, and

that's the right choice.

Chris Jericho/Kenny Omega/Kota Ibushi vs. Konosuke Takeshita/Sammy Guevara/Will Ospreay

This is the Don Callis Family match, which has seen two feuds combined into one for the sake of taking away some of Callis' television time. Ignoring that aspect though, we should be in for a heck of a match here, especially if Ibushi is able to wrestle more like his old self than the version we have seen in AEW so far. Everything else should work well and I'm wanting to see how this goes.

After dominating for a good while, this should be the match where Callis and company can drop a match to the conquering heroes. Guevara taking a fall from Omega or even Jericho won't ruin him as they can get set up for another singles showdown in the future. Either way, this has the potential to steal the show and if they can get to that higher level, it very well may be the best thing on the show.

Ring Of Honor World Title/New Japan Strong Openweight Title: Eddie Kingston(c) vs. Katsuyori Shibata

It's a double title match with Shibata's ROH Pure Title not on the line, meaning commentary has said that Shibata can become a triple crown champion. At least Shibata is someone who has wrestled in Ring Of Honor more than once, as there is far too much of a tendency for random people to get title shots (like earlier in the show or example). Shibata is also someone Kingston is going to respect so there is a real chance he'll bring the work here.

As for a winner, much like the Trios Titles, there isn't much of a reason to believe the title is going to change hands, especially so soon after Kingston won the ROH title in the first place. Kingston needs to rack up some wins to make him feel like a bigger deal and this would be a nice addition. It should be a hard hitting match as well and that should take

them far enough, but yeah Kingston retains.

Ring Of Honor Tag Team Titles: Maxwell Jacob Friedman(c) vs. Righteous

So this was supposed to be a tag match with Adam Cole included but he's basically destroyed his ankle, leaving us with a handicap match instead. That puts them in a tough spot and again I'm not sure where this is going to go. On one hand, MJF doesn't need to have the titles anymore if Cole is injured, but the titles changing hands would involve the Righteous beating the AEW World Champion.

As little sense as it might make, I'll go with MJF retaining, as I can't imagine either Vincent or Dutch pinning him or making him give up. There is always the chance of some kind of screwy finish and that is probably coming later, but it is still hard to fathom that anyone but the Kingdom is taking the titles from Cole and MJF. Or is it just MJF these days? Either way, the Righteous don't win here.

Hangman Page vs. Swerve Strickland

This is the match that has felt the most interesting throughout the build to the show and the contract signing this week kept that interest high. Both guys need a big win and they have me wanting to see them fight, which is a great sign for one of them. Hopefully the loser isn't going to be hurt that badly but there is a good chance that this is going to continue beyond this match.

Give me Swerve here, as a Page win would seem to wrap things up between them with a tighter bow. As much as Page could use a win, he's had success before and is a much more accomplished star in AEW. Let Swerve get his win and move up the card a bit, as a win over a former World Champion is going to do a lot of good no matter what. Page should be fine, but either way, this match should rock.

Bryan Danielson vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

What we have here is the kind of match that sells itself on name value alone. The idea of Danielson vs. Sabre Jr. is going to get hardcore fans interested and there is a very real chance that they could live up to or even exceed their expectations. That might be a very hard task to pull off, but these are the kind of stars who might be able to pull that kind of a miracle off.

As has been a trend here, there isn't much of a reason for the star who is going to be going away after this show winning, so I'll take Danielson to win here. Yes he did it in a pay per view main event against a guest star this year and that should cover him for well over a year, but I can't imagine Sabre winning here. Danielson has things to do in AEW and downgrading him (as much as that can be done) with a loss to a one off guest star doesn't make sense.

TNT Title: Christian Cage(c) vs. Darby Allin

This is the rumored main event for the show and with Allin as the hometown boy in a 2/3 falls match, that is not the worst idea. These two had a rather nice match a month or so ago on Collision and if they do that again with more time and on a bigger stage, we should be in for a pretty solid main event. That leaves a pair of questions though and I think I have the answer to at least one.

Of course I'll take Allin winning here, as otherwise it would run a real threat of killing Seattle for AEW. Allin winning is the perfect way to go and it would be a great moment to end things on. Then again, there is also the chance that we get an Edge debut here to do something with Cage, though hopefully that doesn't include giving him an assist to keep the title. Allin wins here, as he should.

Overall Thoughts

That's a lot of matches. Once I get to the end of the card, I've already forgot a good few of the matches involved as there are too many for the show's own good. Then again that is the case with almost every AEW show, which makes it all the more frustrating. The action will be rather good as it almost always is, but the way the show is presented is such a self imposed roadblock. It still feels like a B show, but now it feels like a rather bloated B show.

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