

Full Gear 2023 Preview

AEW has changed up its pay per view schedule so much that their original Big Four do not exactly feel as important these days. While the promotion isn't ice cold, they don't have the hottest product in the world going into this show. That being said, AEW's pay per view record is more than good enough to rally things up in the blink of an eye. The main event and a few other things have me interested and that might be enough to carry things. Let's get to it.

Zero Hour: Ring Of Honor World Title: Eddie Kingston(c) vs. Jay Lethal

So this match, which felt like it could have headlined Final Battle next month, is instead taking place here and might not even main event the pre-show. Lethal's friends helped him beat Kingston to set this up and now Kingston wants to face him one one. That should work out rather well as Lethal is capable of wrestling a good, simple match against anyone and we could be in for something nice here.

I'll go with Kingston winning, as Lethal isn't exactly on fire right now. There is little reason to change the title here since this feels like a way to give Kingston a win over an ROH legend. I've heard worse ideas, though I'm not sure who is going to face Kingston at Final Battle. They teased something with Ortiz on Rampage, but that's for next month. For now, Kingston wins here and moves on to Final Battle.

Zero Hour: Claudio Castagnoli vs. Buddy Matthews

The two stables have been kind of teasing each other in recent weeks and then Castagnoli saved Wheeler Yuta from Matthews after their match on Collision. Therefore, we have a heck of a rather hard hitting showdown and that should be more than enough to make for some entertaining television. Matthews continues to feel like someone who could be a breakout star

and it's nice to see him getting this kind of spot.

For now though, Castagnoli wins here, as the only way I can imagine seeing Matthews win is through some House Of Black interference. This is one of those matches that sounds good on paper and will probably be even better when they actually get in the ring. Castagnoli is about as dependable as you can get and we should be in for a good, hard hitting, ten or so minute match here.

Ring Of Honor Tag Team Titles: Maxwell Jacob Friedman/Samoa Joe(c) vs. The Gunns

Joe is teaming with MJF in the place of Adam Cole, though I'm not sure if it's going to be a permanent thing. At the same time, Joe is probably going to want some compensation for helping MJF, which likely leads to a title match next month in Long Island. For now though, they have to deal with a talented team who can be a threat to win the titles. Granted they're fighting to be the champions of a show they've never wrestled on.

As much as I'd love to see MJF get away from the titles and have them actually be around in ROH, I'm not sure I can picture the Gunns winning here. MJF and maybe Joe will have to lose the titles at some point in the future, though that might not happen until Final Battle. ROH needs the titles back, but this doesn't feel like the spot where that is going to happen just yet.

AEW Women's Title: Hikaru Shida(c) vs. Toni Storm

I try to get what I think are the most obvious results out of the way in these things and that seems to be the case here. Shida is a good champion and has been one of the most dependable people in all of AEW, but she's up against a different kind of force here. Storm has tapped into something with this Timeless deal and that feels like it is going to be enough to go somewhere.

Of course I'll take Storm here as I can't see any reason to keep the title on Shida. While she's very good and one of the workhorses of the division, but Storm is on another level entirely at the moment. It makes all the sense in the world to give her the title as it's a case of striking while the iron is hot. This should be a layup, and unless Mariah May costs Storm the title, Storm gets the gold here.

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

We'll stick with the women here and another match that has a somewhat clear favorite. Hart seemed ready to take the title last month at WrestleDream but lost to Statlander, which makes me wonder how things are going to go here. This feels like it should be Hart's to lose, though Blue being in there is a wild card given how much it seems AEW has wanted to push her.

It's trickier than I thought but I'll go with Hart winning here. At some point the House Of Black needs some gold and it would make sense for Hart to get them back on the champions' list here. Hart has been built up very well in recent months and it feels like the time to go somewhere with that. Statlander has become a star during her reign, but it's ok to move her out here and maybe into the main Women's Title picture. Hart wins here, though Blue is a longshot option too.

Chris Jericho/Kenny Omega vs. Young Bucks

This is the Bucks' title shot vs. the Canadians' future as a team because, believe it or not, the Bucks can't handle Omega having another friend. They did a bit of a rushed buildup to this one as the Bucks weren't happy with Omega and Jericho teaming together because Omega seems to have forgotten the Elite. Thankfully that means the Bucks have turned heel again, which suits them so much better.

I'll take Jericho and Omega to win here, as it would make the Bucks all the more frustrated and get them out of the title picture at the same time. The Bucks are going to find

something else to whine about anyway so maybe the loss is enough to do just that. Omega and Jericho have done well enough as a team and I could see them going for the Tag Team Titles, even if it feels like a rehash of Omega and Hangman Page. Then again, the Elite's whole thing is about repeating the same melodrama so that kind of fits. Omega and Jericho win here, or at least I think they do.

International Title: Orange Cassidy(c) vs. Jon Moxley

So this headlined a show about two and a half months ago but now we're right back where we started before All Out. It felt like we were going to get back here eventually and maybe we're here a bit earlier than expected, but the rematch is on. Moxley no sold the Orange Punch on Dynamite to scare Cassidy, which puts this in quite the different place than the original version.

As much as it would make sense for Cassidy to win here and tie the series, it feels like AEW wants to get back to where this was supposed to be when Moxley won at All Out. Maybe that means Cassidy comes back and wins the third match down the line, but Moxley was champion for all of a few weeks before the concussion screwed things up. I'll go with Moxley here, despite a feeling that Cassidy could win with a rollup for a shock victory.

Sting/Darby Allin/Adam Copeland vs. Christian Cage/Luchasaurus/Nick Wayne

And yes, Ric Flair will be here with Sting and company. That's likely going to get a bunch of the focus and yes there is always the chance that Flair turns on Sting again because we must repeat history every chance we can. For now though, it seems much more like a way to set up Copeland vs. Cage down the line and that is not the worst idea given how rarely they have fought over the years.

Outside of Flair cheating though, this should be Copeland and

company's to win. Wayne can be right there to take a fall without damaging anything major going forward, as tends to be the case in a six man like this. Things will probably break down multiple times, but this is another step in Sting's retirement tour and having him get a win on pay per view is a fine way for him to step away from California.

Tag Team Titles: Ricky Starks/Big Bill(c) vs. La Faccion Ingovernable vs. FTR vs. Kings Of The Black Throne

Say it with me: it's a ladder match. That feels like a requirement that AEW has to cover every so often and we're getting it here for reasons of "Bill is tall". That's not exactly a great reason to have a ladder match but that's modern wrestling for you. The only team you can probably write off here is FTR as they've had the titles so recently that getting them again doesn't make a ton of sense. That leaves us with three options and it could be either of them.

I'll take the champs to retain here, as I could go for seeing more of what they can do. They won the titles about a month and a half ago and have wound up doing some nice things with them. Let them get a defense in here, even though it might not be the most traditional match. What matters is getting ready for another match against one of these teams later on, but that might have to wait for Omega and Jericho if all things stand. For now though, the champs retain.

Hangman Page vs. Swerve Strickland

This is the "steal the show" match as it feels like they're having two young stars get the chance to break through in a Texas Death Match (or Last Man Standing to everyone else). That's a bit weird when Page is already one of the most decorated stars in AEW history, but Page is out for revenge/blood on Strickland and that often makes for a much more interesting situation.

This feels like Page getting his revenge so I'll take that

here after one heck of a fight. Strickland has been waiting for that big breakout moment and while it has been said over and over again, it should be coming one day. I just don't think it's here, as the idea of having Page get his home violated like that and then lose in the big fight seems like a bad idea. Page wins here, after a war.

AEW World Title: Maxwell Jacob Friedman(c) vs. Jay White

If this wasn't the main event (or at least it should be), I would have put it high up because this doesn't feel like the highest drama. White stole the belt at the start of their feud and has mostly kept it since, but now MJF wants the belt and the win. They've done a nice job with making me want to see MJF beat White and get everything back, but they might have tilted it a bit too far one way.

Naturally MJF retains here and gets the belt back. That's not exactly a deep story and it's hard to fathom that it doesn't end with MJF getting the belt back here. Samoa Joe is all but guaranteed to be waiting for MJF next month in Long Island and having MJF win here is kind of required to make that work. White has done well enough but it's time to move on without him as champion.

Overall Thoughts

The more I think about it, the more I would consider Strickland vs. Page headlining. It might not be the highest profile match on the show, but it certainly feels like the hottest one. I'm worried that it might be good enough that nothing can follow it and that could ruin whatever comes after. The show looks good enough, though having it come so soon after the previous one feels off in AEW> I'll still take them as having a real chance to make this work though as Full Gear seems like it has a good deal of potential, as usual.

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