

Full Gear 2023: Rather Well Violence

Full Gear 2023

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Location: Kia Forum, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Excalibur, Tony Schiavone, Nigel McGuinness

We're back to one of the main pay per views and that should mean a heck of a show. This time around we've got MJF defending the World Title against Jay White, who has the physical title. Other than that, Swerve Strickland vs. Hangman Page has the potential to be a heck of a violent fight. Let's get to it.

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

Kingston is defending, Ring Of Honor executive Stokely Hathaway is on commentary, and Lethal's friends are here, despite Kingston saying he wanted this to be one on one. Kingston sweeps the leg down for two to start and sends Lethal outside but he's smart enough to not follow him (as Lethal is quickly surrounded).

Lethal pulls him down for a posting and some right hands, setting up a triple strut from Lethal, Jeff Jarrett and Sonjay Dutt. A forearm from Dutt rocks Kingston again as Hathaway is promising some stern talkings after the match. Lethal grabs a chinlock before stomping away at the ribs/arm.

Kingston fights up and gets in the boot scrapes in the corner. A distraction cuts that off but Lethal can't hit the top rope elbow. The Lethal Injection is countered into a Saito suplex but Kingston has to take out Dutt. Cue Ortiz to guitar Dutt as another Lethal Injection is countered into the half and half. The spinning backfist retains Kingston's title at 10:53.

Rating: C+. Lethal never felt like a serious threat to win the title but it's smart to have Kingston face a former World Champion to add another win to his resume. I'm not sure who is going to be challenging Kingston at Final Battle, but they seem to be teasing Ortiz. I know there's a history there, but that hardly feels like a headlining match on the biggest show of the year.

Zero Hour: Claudio Castagnoli vs. Buddy Matthews

They slug it out to start but Castagnoli can't get the swing. Instead they go outside where Castagnoli sends him into the barricade, setting up the running uppercut. Matthews gets in a hard shot of his own though and the top rope Meteora gets two back inside. The chinlock keeps Castagnoli down for a bit, only to have him come back with the discus lariat. Some kicks set up another failed swing attempt so Castagnoli uppercuts him for two.

Back up and Matthews tries another Meteora, only to get pulled into the swing. They go up top where Castagnoli fires off headbutts until Matthews slips out and hits a Cheeky Nandos Kick. A Jackhammer gives Matthews two and he grabs a Crossface. That's broken up as well and Castagnoli grabs a Riccola Bomb into the Scorpion Deathlock for the tap at 10:26.

Rating: B. Sometimes you just need two big, strong guys to hit each other really hard for a little while and that is what we got here. It was an entertaining, hard hitting match and Castagnoli won. I could still go for Matthews getting a better push, but for now I can settle for him getting something of a showcase match here.

Post match Castagnoli offers a handshake but Matthews bails.

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

MJF and Joe are defending and of course they're in Los Angeles

Lakers gear. The Gunns take over on MJF to start but Joe cuts off a whip into the corner like a good partner. MJF says he doesn't need Joe, but they send the Gunns outside for a heck of a suicide dive from Joe. Back in and Joe snaps off the right hands in the corner, setting up an enziguri.

It's back to MJF, who gets caught in the wrong corner and has to send both Gunns outside. A roll underneath a double clothesline sets up a big boot for two on Austin. Joe loads up the MuscleBuster but MJF tags himself in and tries his own version. That's broken up so MJF can hit a double DDT, only to have Joe break up the Kangaroo Kick. The Gunns escape stereo MuscleBusters and 3:10 To Yuma hits Joe. MJF breaks up the cover...and Adam Cole is here! The distraction lets Joe Koquina Clutch Colten to retain at 9:23.

Rating: C+. This is about what it was always going to be, as the Gunns might be good but they're not going to beat the World Champion and his next likely challenger. I could certainly go for getting the titles off of MJF already so they can do something in Ring Of Honor again, but the champs retaining here makes sense in the bigger story with MJF and Joe.

Post match Joe leaves and the Gunns jump MJF again to wreck his knee. The Gunns Pillmanize the leg and MJF has to be stretchered into an ambulance. MJF shouts to Cole to not let him take his title.

The opening video looks at the show's matches and talks about how people are fighting for prizes and honor

We open with a recap of MJF's injury.

We run down the card.

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

A children's choir sings Cage to the ring for a nearly creepy bonus. Ric Flair is here with Sting and company. Edge has his own face painted as well for a nice touch. Allin cranks away on Wayne's arm to start, setting up the springboard high angle armdrag. Sting comes in to send Wayne outside for a whip into the barricade.

Back in and it's off to Cage vs. Copeland but of course it's off to Luchasaurus instead. Copeland tries to slug away before Allin comes in, with Cage getting in a cheap shot. A chokeslam over the top to the apron leaves Allin down, meaning the villains get to take turns beating on him. Wayne stomps away and mocks Flair before hitting a backsplash for two. They go up top, where Allin manages a super Code Red for a needed breather.

That's not going to be enough though as Cage slides underneath the ring and pulls Copeland off the rope to break up the tag. Cage misses a spear though and it's Copeland coming in, meaning Luchasaurus and Wayne bail from an attempted tag. Everything breaks down and Allin hits a dive through the ropes, followed by Sting hitting one off the apron.

Back in and a double Scorpion Death Drop puts Luchasaurus down. Luchasaurus fights back up and wrecks the good guys, leaving Cage to get in a fight with Flair on the floor. Cage hits him low but accidentally hits Luchasaurus with the TNT Title, allowing Copeland to chase Cage into the crowd. The spear and Coffin Drop finish Luchasaurus at 15:01.

Rating: B-. Good choice for an opener here as the fans are always going to be into whatever Sting is doing. As usual, Cage is a phenomenal heel and I'm sure his next promo will play into this perfectly. Copeland vs. Cage is probably coming next month or at Revolution, but for now I'll take a good enough opener as part of Sting's retirement tour.

Jay White is brought to the stage where we're told the MJF vs.

White match is canceled and White is....cut off by Adam Cole. There is no way that White is leaving with the title, so he has talked to Tony Khan. If MJF can't wrestle tonight, Cole will do it in his place. White is fine with that. If Cole talked to Khan already, why was Schiavone out there to award the title to White?

We recap Orange Cassidy defending the International Title against Jon Moxley. Cassidy lost to Moxley in September at All Out but then a string of injuries have put us right back where we started.

International Title: Orange Cassidy vs. Jon Moxley

Cassidy is defending and gets jumped in the corner to start. Moxley sends him into the corner and then out to the floor. Some rams into the announcers' table have Cassidy in even more trouble and a release suplex makes it worse back inside. Moxley stomps away in the corner before cutting off a charge with a swinging Boss Man Slam. They go up top where Cassidy fires off some headbutts, setting up a superplex for the big crash.

Moxley, now busted open, gets dropped with a diving DDT for two. Cassidy sends him outside and over the announcers' table, meaning the suicide dive can connect. The suicide elbow connects as well but Moxley is right back with the hammer and anvil elbows. The Bulldog choke is broken up but Cassidy can't hit the Beach Break.

Instead Cassidy grabs the Redrum until Moxley grabs the buckle to escape, pulling off the pad in the process. A cutter puts Cassidy down and a Gotch style piledriver gives Moxley two. Moxley gets set into the buckle, setting up three straight Orange Punches to....barely keep Moxley down. Three more set up the Beach Break to retain at 12:00.

Rating: B. It's a good fight and the ending felt like Cassidy was slaying a giant, but this would have been better if

Cassidy hadn't won the title back in the first place. It makes Cassidy feel like a bigger deal, though I'm not sure where they're supposed to go with him from here. He's already had the big long term title reign and now he has beaten a former World Champion, so the main event scene would seem to be the only thing left. That might be a stretch, but it seems to be the only remaining outcome.

Post match their friends come in to check on them, with Wheeler Yuta bumping into Hook.

Mark Briscoe is in the Continental Classic. He eats continental breakfasts!

Women's Title: Toni Storm vs. Hikaru Shida

Storm, with Luther, is challenging and rips up the script to show you how serious this is. Shida slugs away to start and hits a running knee in the corner. Chops in the corner and more in the corner have Storm in trouble as Nigel confuses the rest of commentary with silent movie references. Storm fights back with the windup punch as Mariah May is watching in the back. Shida is back with a running knee but Storm knocks her down again. Luther sticks something in Storm's trunks and hands her a shoe, which knocks Shida down for two.

Shida strikes away and gets two off a Falcon Arrow, only to hurt her leg coming off the top. An ankle lock of all things has Shida in trouble but a quick grab of the rope gets her out of trouble. Another shoe shot is blocked so Shida grabs the kendo stick and unloads on Luther. Back in and Shida rolls her up for two, only for Storm to grab a German suplex. The hip attack, with a metal tray included in Storm's tights, finishes Shida at 10:22.

Rating: B-. That ending was more than a little weird as Storm, the big face of the match, has to cheat to win despite Shida not having some big knockout beforehand. Not that it really matters though, as this was ALL about getting the title back

on Storm. The Timeless deal is the hottest thing in the women's division at the moment and it would have been insane to not ride that momentum while it's going so strong.

Post match Mariah May comes out to give Storm some flowers. Luther takes Storm to the back.

Eddie Kingston is in the Continental Title and says his titles will be on the line in the tournament, which is to crown a Continental Title.

Tag Team Titles: Kings Of The Black Throne vs. FTR vs. La Faccion Ingobernable vs. Ricky Starks/Big Bill

Starks and Bill are defending in a ladder match. It's a brawl to start with FTR breaking up a Bill vs. King showdown. Harwood brings in a ladder, which is sent into his face for a knockdown. Wheeler and Rush slug it out inside until Wheeler hits a dive onto a bunch of people. Dralistico hits a bigger dive onto the pile, followed by a moonsault from Black and a superplex from Harwood.

Back in and Harwood and Rush have a ladder duel until Harwood can do the Terry Funk spot. Rush kicks Wheeler in the face in the corner and hits the Tranquilo pose. Black throws a ladder into Wheeler's face but Wheeler gets in a low blow and a piledriver onto a ladder. Starks comes back in and cleans some house, including a rope walk shot to Harwood's head.

With everyone else down, King goes up so Bill tips the ladder over to send him into another ladder in the corner. Dralistico hits a springboard Codebreaker to Bill and it's time for a bunch of people to go up a group of ladders. With that broken up, Dralistico hits a poisonrana on King, who is right back with a Ganso Bomb onto a bridged ladder. Wheeler dives onto King onto a ladder so Harwood and Starks go up. With Harwood knocked down, Starks drops Wheeler as well and retains at 20:34.

Rating: B. This is one of those matches that you've seen done a bunch and it does still entertain. That was the case again here, with a bunch of high spots that set up a bunch of crashes. It wasn't a great ladder match as they did stuff that has been done better before, but at least Starks and Bill get to continue their rather entertaining reign.

TBS Title: Julia Hart vs. Kris Statlander vs. Skye Blue

Statlander is defending and slams them both to start. Hart is sent into the corner so we get a Statlander vs. Blue showdown. With that not working, they go outside so Statlander can suplex both of them at once. Back in and Statlander gets knocked down, leaving Blue and Hart to shake hands (with left hands) before fighting as well. Blue hammers away and gets two off a kick to the face. Statlander is back up and all three are knocked down for a breather.

Hart is knocked outside and Statlander faceplants Blue before going up. That lets Hart knock her back down and moonsault Blue for two as Statlander makes a save. Blue reverses Saturday Night Fever and grabs Code Blue for two of her own. Hartless has Blue in trouble until Statlander suplexes both of them down (Excalibur: "One could describe her as a human suplex machine!" Taz: "EASY THERE PARTNER!"). Statlander grabs Saturday Night Fever to Blue but Hart knocks Statlander off and steals the pin for the title at 11:19.

Rating: C+. This was quite the triple threat match and not much more than that. The "one person hits their finish and someone else steals the pin" is as played out as you can get. While I wasn't wild on how she did it, I'm rather pleased with Hart winning the title. She probably should have gotten it last month, but at least she got the title here, as she should have.

Tony Schiavone brings in the new big signing for AEW...and it's Will Ospreay. Cue Ospreay to say he's got to finish up with

New Japan and then he'll be on the road to Revolution, where he'll be all yours. He's ready for the best in AEW, especially at Wembley Stadium. This wasn't exactly a shocking surprise, but it's probably about as big of a star as they could have realistically brought in.

We recap Hangman Page vs. Swerve Strickland in a Texas Death match. They've been feuding for a few months now and Swerve made it personal by breaking into Page's house. Page is out for blood and revenge.

Swerve Strickland vs. Hangman Page

Texas Death match, meaning you can only win by submission or knockout (still not how a Texas Death match works but whatever). Prince Nana is here with Swerve and does his dance with a dance team. Page jumps Swerve during his entrance and hits a powerbomb into a Buckshot Lariat as I don't think the bell ever rang. They go outside with Page whipping him into the barricade over and over. Page grabs some duct tape and ties his hands together for a staple to the bicep.

A chair to the head knocks Swerve silly again and we've got blood. Page staples a paper to Swerve's face and lets Swerve's blood drip onto his face (the fans aren't sure about that). A barbed wire chair shot to the head is cut off by a low blow to give Swerve a breather. Swerve gets his hands untied and Page staples him in the chest...to no effect. A hard shot to the face knocks Page down the barbed wire chair is wedged in the corner. Page is sent into said chair but he's back up for a slugout.

They fight to the apron, where Swerve hits a Death Valley Driver onto a cinder block. Somehow that's not enough for a knockout so Swerve piledrives him onto the barricade (giving us a shot of Swerve's face, which is COVERED in blood). Back in and more right hands seem to wake Page up so he hits a pair of fall away slams. Page rakes some barbed wire over Swerve's

face and then wraps it around his chest for another fall away slam.

With Swerve on the floor, Page grabs the barbed wire chair for the moonsault to knock Swerve down again. Back in and the Buckshot Lariat is blocked so Swerve kicks the barbed wire chair into his face. Page is right back with a Tombstone onto the barbed wire chair but Nana breaks up the ten count. Swerve manages a powerbomb onto the chair, setting up the Swerve Stomp onto Page onto the chair. Page is up again so let's grab a bag of glass...which is stomped onto Page's back as well.

The JML Driver gets nine so Swerve Cactus Clotheslines him...and pulls out a barbed wire board. Said board is bridged between two chairs in the ring but Page slams him through said board. Then a powerbomb and Dead Eye onto the wire lets Page wrap the wire around Swerve's neck. The Buckshot Lariat...still doesn't finish as Nana pulls Swerve to the floor to break the count.

Cue Brian Cage to wreck Page and set up a table, but Page saves himself with some barbed wire shots. Nana tries to come in but gets Dead Eyed through the table at ringside. Swerve is back up with the remains of the cinder block to the head though and then chokes Page out with a chain to FINALLY win at 29:56.

Rating: A-. Well, if you're going to go violent and death matchish, do it like this. These guys beat the living daylights out of each other and it felt like they had been through a war. It was one of the best fights I've seen in a good while, which has been Swerve's forte over the years. The one drawback here is it went about five to seven minutes long, which hurt it a bit. I'm not sure if Page losing was the right call, but at least the numbers caught up with him. What might matter the most here is giving Swerve the big win that he needs, as this was one heck of a fight and worth seeing, assuming you don't mind quite a bit of blood.

We recap the Young Bucks vs. Kenny Omega/Chris Jericho. The Bucks aren't happy that Omega is teaming with Jericho and want to fight about it. If Omega and Jericho win, they get the Bucks' Tag Team Title shot but if the Bucks win, Omega and Jericho can no longer team together.

Chris Jericho/Kenny Omega vs. Young Bucks

Don Callis is on commentary as Omega runs Nick to start. The springboard spinning armdrag takes Omega down and we get a handshake before it's off to Matt vs. Jericho. That doesn't get very far so Omega comes back in but doesn't seem overly thrilled. Everything breaks down and Jericho triangle dropkicks Nick to the floor. The Bucks are back up to crush Jericho's arm in the steps and the villains take over back inside.

The arm is wrapped around the post as Nick pulls away, only to have Jericho score with a middle rope dropkick. Omega comes in and tells Matt that he can't escape, only for Matt to escape. Instead Omega moonsaults onto Nick at ringside, followed by Jericho Lionsaulting onto both of them. The Walls have Matt in trouble and Omega breaks up Nick's springboard save.

Jericho's arm gives out though and Matt slips out, allowing him to hit the double northern lights suplex (because Matt Jackson, who had a back injury for years, can shrug off about a minute in a Boston crab and suplex two men at once). Nick German suplexes Omega onto the apron and Nick's Swanton to a hanging Omega gets two. Back in and the referee checks on Omega, allowing Matt to kick Jericho low. It works so well on Jericho that Omega gets one as well and a Judas Effect gets two on Jericho.

The BTE Trigger hits Jericho for two more but he's able to send Matt's kick into Nick. Matt kicks Jericho in the arm but Omega is back up to knock both of them into the ropes. Omega has to decide who to V Trigger and goes with Matt, only to

have the One Winged Angel broken up. Matt hits Omega with his own One Winged Angel but Omega is back up with a German suplex for two more. Jericho is back up with a superkick but gets superkicked down. Back up and Omega grabs the One Winged Angel to finish Matt at 20:44.

Rating: B. It was good stuff and a heck of a match which didn't get to that epic level. It doesn't help that it's so similar to Omega/Hangman Page vs. the Bucks from a few years ago but I can go with the slightly watered down version just as well. If nothing else, this gives the Bucks something else to complain about, just in case they only have five things to whine about this week. I do like the idea of Omega and Jericho continuing as a team though as they work well together.

Post match the Bucks turn down a handshake and rant a lot.

AEW World Title: Adam Cole vs. Jay White

So Cole is defending on behalf of MJF but White has the title...and never mind as here is MJF, as they set up an angle to run for about four and a half hours.

AEW World Title: Maxwell Jacob Friedman vs. Jay White

MJF, with a very banged up leg (and Cole), is defending and the Gunns are here too. White, being intelligent, goes right after the knee to take over. A suplex into the corner gives White two and MJF sends him outside, where the Gunns get caught with a chair. That's good for an ejection and MJF gets a breather, but White tells Cole to get in. MJF gets fired up and tells White to hit him, which he does, square in the knee.

Back up and MJF hammers him into the corner for a bite to the head, followed by the Kangaroo Kick. For some reason MJF loads up a dive but White kicks out the leg without much trouble. White's knee gives out when he's whipped across the ring but he manages to kick White in the corner. White is back up with a swinging Rock Bottom and dumps him out to the floor. MJF

manages to fight back again and sends him through the announcers' table, setting up a top rope elbow to the floor.

Back in and the dragon screw legwhip over the rope puts MJF down again and the bad leg is tied in the Tree of Woe. The leg is fine enough for MJF to pull himself up and superplex White back down. White goes up to bring him back down with a super swinging Rock Bottom for two more. The chops make MJF tell him to bring it so White Downward Spirals him. The Blade Runner is countered into an exchange of rollups for two each and they knock each other down.

White blocks the Heatseeker...so MJF hits a running cutter over the top and out to the floor. Back in and the knee gives out again as MJF can't even stand. The doctor asks if MJF wants to stop it so MJF hits himself in the knee. White grabs some dragon screw legwhips and we hit the Figure our. Cole teases tossing in the towel but MJF manages to turn it over. White escapes and yells at Cole before trying to grab the ROH Tag Team Title belt.

The pulling sends it into MJF's head for two and the fans are still into it. The referee gets bumped though and Cole loads up the diamond ring. White goes for the leg though and grabs the ring instead, so MJF goes low to save himself. The Gunns come in and are quickly dispatches, setting up a ring shot to retain the title at 29:56.

Rating: B+. This was a weird match as MJF was the fighting underdog throughout and then cheated to even out a bunch of the cheating White had already done. The story they had went rather well, though it could have been trimmed down a bit at the end of a really long show. At the same time, it doesn't exactly make White look good to not be able to beat someone on one leg who had already wrestled that night.

MJF and Cole celebrate and limp up the ramp to end the show. No Devil stuff at all.

Overall Rating: A-. Another rather good pay per view from AEW, even with the show feeling rather long at times. As usual, there was nothing close to a bad match with the weakest match being completely fine. The Texas Death match is the best match on the show with the main event being a close second. I'm not sure if this felt like one of the biggest shows AEW has run, but it's certainly worth a look, assuming you don't mind some of the matches going a good bit longer than they need to.

Results

Eddie Kingston b. Jay Lethal – Spinning backfist

Claudio Castagnoli b. Buddy Matthews – Scorpion Deathlock

Maxwell Jacob Friedman/Samoa Joe b. The Gunns – Koquina Clutch to Colten

Sting/Darby Allin/Adam Copeland b. Christian Cage/Nick Wayne/Luchasaurus – Coffin Drop to Luchasaurus

Orange Cassidy b. Jon Moxley – Beach Break

Toni Storm b. Hikaru Shida – Running hip attack with metal tray

Ricky Starks/Big Bill b. FTR, La Faccion Ingovernable and Kings Of The Black Throne – Starks pulled down the titles

Julia Hart b. Kris Statlander and Skye Blue – Saturday Night Fever to Blue

Swerve Strickland b. Hangman Page when Page could not answer the ten count

Chris Jericho/Kenny Omega b. Young Bucks – One Winged Angel to Matt

Maxwell Jacob Friedman b. Jay White – Right hand with diamond ring

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