

# 205 Live – February 21, 2017: The Supplemental Show

## 205 Live

Date: February 21, 2017

Location: Citizens Business Bank Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

We're less than two weeks away from Fastlane and that means it's time for some of the more basic build towards the Cruiserweight Title match. There are three matches announced for tonight, all of which suggest that this is going to be a much more wrestling heavy show than one built around angles. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of last night's contract signing.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat for a bit.

### Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

This almost took place on Raw but Kendrick laid him out instead. Tozawa goes off on him with forearms and a running kick to the chest. Some mounted right hands have Kendrick in even more trouble and Tozawa shouts that he doesn't need him. Tozawa chokes with the boot in the corner as this is completely one sided so far.

Kendrick finally manages to post him to take over and it's time to work on Tozawa's neck. A big boot sets up the Captain's Hook but Tozawa gets a hand between the arms for the block. Tozawa sends him outside for a suicide dive and the crowd is getting into this. With nothing else working, Kendrick sends him into the apron and ties Tozawa's foot into the cables underneath the ring for the countout at 5:42.

**Rating:** C+. This was a way to set up something else down the line and there's nothing wrong with that. Tozawa has the potential to be a big star in the division and I can actually get behind the idea of Kendrick as a gatekeeper. He isn't exactly great as a top heel but this role is fitting him a bit better. I'm still not sure why he carries that flag but whatever.

Kendrick says that was another lesson for Tozawa. More lessons are

coming.

Noam Dar didn't like Rich Swann dedicating a match to Alicia Foxxxx last week so tonight, Dar is going to do the same thing. Fox is a bit under the weather this week but worry not because she would NEVER leave him.

#### Noam Dar vs. Mustafa Ali

They trade wristlocks to start until Ali backflips away and dropkicks him to the floor. That means a big flip dive (Aries: "MAMA BELLOMO!") with Ali jumping over the referee for a nice touch. Dar kicks him in the leg on the way back in though and things slow down again. Back in and Dar starts working on the arm for a change, only to eat a dropkick to the face.

Dar uppercuts him into the corner but gets caught in a tornado DDT to put both guys down. It's Ali up first though and he takes Dar over to the corner, only to have Noam get to the apron before the reverse 450 can launch. That's enough to have Ali go head first into the post, setting up a running knee to the head for the pin at 7:34.

**Rating:** C. Dar continues to be fine in the ring but he's still missing a certain fire that would carry him up towards the top of the division. I'm curious to see who Fox could leave him for (it's pretty clear that's where they're going) and where Dar can go from there so it's far from hopeless. Ali should be higher up on the food chain than he is too but for some reason he's cooled off a lot in recent weeks.

Austin Aries introduces a video on...himself, as he's getting back in the ring soon. That would have been better as a surprise attack but Neville vs. Aries for the title at Wrestlemania would have me drooling.

Neville wasn't pleased with the attack during the contract signing and has his sights focused on Gallagher.

Jack calls tonight's match a preview for Fastlane.

#### Jack Gallagher vs. Tony Nese

The idea here is that Nese is the most comparable person to Neville on the roster. Nese throws him down to start and we hit the pose. That earns him a takedown into a SICK looking armbars with Gallagher tweaking the mustache and making sure his hair stays straight. Back up (thankfully without a torn pectoral), Nese elbows him in the face

and tosses Jack over the top for a breather. One heck of a superkick drops Gallagher again and we hit a bodyscissors.

A legdrop gets two but also seems to start Jack's comeback. Gallagher gets two off a crossbody and a sunset flip before headbutting the heck out of Nese. It's too early for the running dropkick but Jack puts him in the Tree of Woe. That's fine with Nese though as he pulls himself up into a super German suplex. Nese goes up top again, allowing Gallagher to catch him in a top rope belly to back superplex. The running corner dropkick puts Nese away at 10:05.

**Rating:** C+. This was a very simple idea and it worked as well as it was going to be able to. Gallagher was in trouble but used his technique and footwork (which he talked about earlier) to come back and win, which is what they'll be aiming for at Fastlane. Then again I don't buy Neville as being in any real danger but at least they're getting the story right.

**Overall Rating:** C+. They basically took a week off for a filler show here but it was still entertaining enough to work. Gallagher is being built up as the best possible challenger for a nothing pay per view and they're already setting up a few things for the future, including Aries' in ring return. You didn't need to see this show but it did exactly what it was supposed to do.

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# 205 Live – January 31, 2017: Hail to the King

## 205 Live

Date: January 31, 2017

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Austin Aries, Corey Graves

It's the Neville Era and that means the new champion needs a challenger to go after the title. In theory that's going to be Rich Swann in a rematch but there's also Cedric Alexander who almost had Neville beaten until some interference cost him the match. This could go multiple ways and that makes for an interesting show. Let's get to it.

Long recap of Neville's rise to the top of the division.

Opening sequence.

### Tony Nese vs. Lince Dorado

The cocky Nese takes him into the corner to start and throws Lince down for good measure. A hurricanrana sends Nese into the corner as well and a high crossbody gets two on Tony. That's enough for Nese who just starts blasting Lince in the face with hard shots, followed by a gutbuster to set up a bodyscissors. That makes sense for him as Nese has the power advantage so hitting Dorado really hard is the right call. Dorado fights back up with the handspring Stunner for two and a good looking dropkick draws an Okada reference from Mauro. Nese shoves him off the top though and the running knee is good for the pin at 6:08.

**Rating:** C. This is how you build someone up: let them pick up win after win and treat them as above the rest of the talent. It makes the crowd feel they're important and that's often going to work better than having some lame angle or a generic promo, especially when Nese isn't the best talker.

Nese goes after Dorado even more but TJ Perkins makes the save. See?

Build Nese up and give him a feud against an established name. Works perfectly.

We look at Swann and Neville brawling last night on Raw, which saw Swann hurt his ankle.

Swann is in a walking boot but Neville comes in and kicks him down anyway. Now that's a heel.

Gran Metalik is coming. He was on the NXT house show I took in last month and he looked great.

#### Akira Tozawa vs. Aaron Solow

Brian Kendrick comes out for commentary and Solow is probably best known as Bayley's real life boyfriend. Feeling out process to start as it seems Tozawa is replacing the injured Tajiri as Kendrick's new rival. A dropkick and backsplash give Tozawa two and Solow is knocked out to the floor. After the suicide dive knocks Aaron silly, the snap German suplex gives Tozawa the pin at 3:03.

**Rating:** D+. Good debut here as Solow gets beaten down like the jobber that he is and Tozawa gets to look awesome. There's only so much you can do in a three minute match and that's all it needed to be. Tozawa could be a modern day Tajiri with some of those strikes, but that German suplex looked even better.

Post match Aries interviews Tozawa, who doesn't speak English.

Noam Dar and Alicia Fox come in to see Neville before their tag match tonight. Dar isn't worried about Jack Gallagher tonight but Neville doesn't want to hear about it. Oh and keep the love life baggage in the back. He leaves before Alicia can freak out.

#### Neville/Noam Dar vs. Jack Gallagher/Cedric Alexander

Gallagher is substituting for the injured Swann. Only Dar and Gallagher shake hands and it's Jack vs. Neville to get things going. Neville grabs a headlock but Jack does his handstand walk to escape, which doesn't sit well with the champ. The much stronger Neville starts in on the arm with Jack doing his spinning reversal.

That earns him a forearm to the face as Neville doesn't have time

for the fanciness. Dar comes in and gets caught in a bulldog headlock takeover out of the corner. It's off to Cedric to stay on the arm with Gallagher putting on a hold that only a British wrestler could pull off. Neville gets tired of these shenanigans and forearms the heck out of Gallagher from the apron. An even harder dropkick to the back of the head makes things even worse.

We hit the chinlock but Dar makes a blind tag and tries to steal his own cover. That's just not cool with the champ so Dar lightens things up a bit by working on the arm. Neville comes back in but Dar tags himself in a second time as you can almost feel the beating coming for him. Gallagher's headbutt gives him two on Dar with Neville having to run in for the save. Dar crawls over for the tag and Neville bails, as he certainly should do. It's back to Alexander for the handspring enziguri followed by the Lumbar Check for the pin at 13:05.

**Rating:** B-. Good, solid main event tag here with Gallagher selling quite well and Neville doing exactly what he should have done. One of the most annoying things that happens in wrestling is when the wrestlers stop doing what their character would do for the sake of a nothing tag. Neville has no allegiance to Dar and Noam ticked him off. This makes sense and I can always go for that.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The main event helps this one quite a bit with the new character and solid psychology being more than enough to make up for a not great opener. The show is rapidly developing its own continuity and feel, which is rather impressive after just ten episodes. Neville really is the king right now and that's going a long way to help this show.

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# NXT – December 28, 2016: A First For NXT

## **NXT**

Date: December 28, 2016

Location: Edion Arena, Osaka, Japan

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

It's a special week in NXT as we're closing out the year with a house show taped over in Japan earlier this month. The main event is Shinsuke Nakamura challenging Samoa Joe for the title in a match we saw a few weeks back. This is also a two hour show, meaning the matches won't have to be as clipped. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick video on Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura.

Opening sequence.

### Oney Lorcan vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Almas wears a mask during his entrance and has no interest in a pre-match handshake. We hear about Almas defeating Nakamura for the IWGP Intercontinental Title a few years back which is almost unthinkable given their statuses in NXT. Almas' headlock doesn't go anywhere so he does the lay on the ropes spot before getting caught in a Lorcan headlock. We talk about the crowd being more silent than usual as Almas takes him down into a chinlock.

Back up and Lorcan hits a running corner clothesline before popping in a few shots to the face. Something like a standing backflip into a reverse DDT (I believe Tetsuya Naito uses the same) gets two on

Lorcan but he comes right back with an inverted exploder. Almas sends him into the corner again with the running double knees getting two despite a foot on the ropes. The hammerlock DDT is broken up and Lorcan takes him to the top for a German superplex (with Almas flipping over in the air) and the pin at 10:06.

**Rating:** C. It's a decent match of two lower level guys hitting each other a lot but that's not the most interesting thing in the world. Above that though, this is making me wonder why this is a full two hour show. I really didn't need to see this match getting ten minutes though there are worse ways to spend a Wednesday night.

#### Aliyah/Liv Morgan vs. Peyton Royce/Billie Kay

Billie gives Liv a quick fireman's carry to start as Corey goes into his usual anti-New Jersey rant. Morgan grabs a sunset flip and rolls Kay around the ring for a few two counts but both of them seem a bit dizzy. Aliyah comes in and gets caught in the wrong corner for some very long legged choking.

The Australians work on Aliyah's back and keep pulling her away from the hot tag. We hit the chinlock for a bit as the beating continues. Liv gets knocked off the apron, which Graves refers to as an insurance policy. Aliyah finally flips out of a double suplex and brings Morgan back in to clean house with a bulldog. An STO gets two on Billie but a blind tag allows Peyton to send Liv face first into Billie's knee for the pin at 8:29.

**Rating:** D+. This was far less interesting than it should have been and a lot of that was due to the length. It felt like they were stretching the match out to fill in time, which isn't what you want to do on a show that already feels longer than it should be. I can appreciate the idea of trying to build up Kay and Royce as the top heels in the division but I'm having a really hard time buying either of them as a threat to Asuka.

#### Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. Akira Tozawa/Tajiri

DIY is defending and this time we get the handshake. Gargano and Tozawa start things off and this time the fans are a bit more into



it. The fans seem split as both guys miss big kicks and bring in their respective partners. Tajiri sprays some mist as Graves questions his fandom with DIY in the ring.

The feeling out process continues with the mist having fallen on Tajiri's back. Ciampa wins a battle of the shoulder blocks but a headlock into a headscissor sequence takes us back to a stalemate. They're almost completely even in the first five minutes. Ciampa starts in on Tozawa's arm but gets taken down for some Tajiri kicks to put the champions in trouble for the first time.

Back from a break with Ciampa telling Tozawa to kick him harder. They take turns sticking their chests out for chops until Tozawa hits him behind the ear to take over. A gutbuster puts Ciampa down but he breaks up a tag to Tajiri as the formula changes a bit. Tozawa kicks him before bringing Tajiri back in for the REAL kicks to the chest. Everything breaks down and Tozawa hits some suicide dives to put the champs in trouble. It doesn't last long though as Gargano hits the spear through the ropes for a close two.

The Tarantula sets up a missed Buzzsaw Kick before it's back to Tozawa for a forearm slugout. Ciampa comes back in for the rolling German suplexes, only to get caught in a snap German suplex from Tozawa. That's enough for Ciampa who kicks the heck out of Tozawa and hits Project Ciampa for two with Tajiri breaking it up. A blind tag brings Gargano back in for the running knee/superkick combination for the pin on Tozawa at 21:04.

**Rating:** B. Now that's a bit more like it. They went a bit long but this was FAR better than anything else on the show so far. Tozawa is really impressive and Tajiri still has it despite being in his mid-40s. I liked this a lot more than I was expecting to as DIY can do no wrong at the moment. I'm not sure that's going to extend to the Authors of Pain though and that scares me.

DIY bows to the challengers post match.

Women's Title: Nia Jax vs. Asuka

Asuka is defending and we're in her hometown. Jax shrugs off the

strikes to start and headbutts the champ into the corner. That earns her an Octopus Hold followed by a guillotine with the announcers bringing up Jax's issues with that hold. Asuka gets thrown into the corner and we take an early break.

Back with Jax tossing Asuka around even more with a release slam getting two. A sidewalk slam gets the same and another comeback is cut off in a hurry, quieting the crowd all over again. Nia drops her with a clothesline as the announcers talk about how bringing the NXT Women's Title to Raw would be a huge deal for Jax's career.

As odd as it sounds, they're absolutely right as the title is probably more valuable than the Smackdown Women's Title and just a few steps behind the Raw counterpart. Some kicks set up a kneebar on Nia but she stands up for the easy break. A hip attack knocks Nia off the apron but Asuka is easily thrown into the apron to put her in trouble again.

The big leg sends Asuka outside again and the announcers aren't sure if Nia is familiar enough with the rules. I get what they're going for but she knows that you have to get a pin in the ring. She's not Kamala guys. Back in and Asuka unloads on her with the strike, followed by a cross armbreaker. Asuka jumps on Nia's back for a sleeper but gets countered into a hard powerbomb for two. Back up and Asuka actually gets her up for a German suplex, followed by one heck of a kick to the jaw to retain the title at 18:52.

**Rating:** B-. This was a cross between Nia vs. Asuka I and either Nia vs. Bayley match, which means it's pretty entertaining stuff. The idea of Asuka having to be pushed to the limit was a good story though at some point Nia needs to find something other than being too confident and getting beaten as a result.

We're in Melbourne next week and hopefully it's not another two hour show.

NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura is challenging. They trade some kicks to the legs to start and Nakamura does his arm waving bit to mess with Joe's head. That's

enough for Joe to take a breather on the floor and we take a break. Back with Joe taking it outside and chopping Nakamura to his knees. The corner enziguri drops Nakamura again and it's time to go after the knees. A spinwheel kick to the leg sets up a leglock and Nakamura is in trouble.

Joe grabs a kneebar for a bit until Nakamura makes the ropes, setting up a big kick to the champ's head. The running knee to the ribs in the corner gets two, followed by Joe's big boot getting the same. We take another break and come back with Joe holding the STF, which is transitioned into the Crossface. Nakamura finally gets to the ropes but can't hook a cross armbreaker. He can however get a triangle choke, sending Joe's legs into the rope for a break of his own.

It's too early for Kinshasa though as Joe powerslams him out of the air for two. Joe can't hook the Muscle Buster so he switches to the Koquina Clutch, only to settle for a hard German suplex instead. An enziguri sends Nakamura outside but he gets out of the Rock Bottom onto the steps that put him out of action for so long earlier this year. The running knee to the back of the neck drops Joe but he's too big for Nakamura to hold up in a fireman's carry. That's fine with Nakamura as he hits the middle rope knee, followed by Kinshasa for the pin and the title at 26:28.

**Rating:** B+. This was a lot better than the version shown before, which only gave us 10:45 of the match. Nakamura fighting back to win in his home country was the right way to end the show and it felt like a big deal on a big stage. Joe should be ready to head up to the main roster as there's nothing left for him to do in NXT.

A lot of posing ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The problem here is the length. This easily could have been trimmed down by half an hour or so (edit some of the matches or just cut off the first two) and it would have been much better as a result. It really felt unnecessary to last this long and not much was gained as a result. I'm not going to think of this show again and that's not something I like thinking on a long NXT show.

Totally watchable show but trim it down to make it that much better.

### Results

Oney Lorcan b. Andrade Cien Almas – German superplex

Billie Kay/Peyton Royce b. Liv Morgan/Aliyah – Bulldog onto Kay's knee

DIY b. Akira Tozawa/Tajiri – Running knee/superkick combination

Asuka b. Nia Jax – Kick to the head

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Samoa Joe – Kinshasa

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# **Cruiserweight Classic – August 31, 2016: They Have It All**

## **Cruiserweight Classic**

Date: August 31, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

The quarterfinals begin tonight with eight participants left as we

head towards the finale in two weeks. Therefore we'll probably see two matches tonight and two more next week which means longer wrestling and more action. There's always the chance of some bonus matches but this seems like a show that's going to stick to the lone concept. Let's get to it.

We open with a look at the Great Eight.

Bryan and Mauro talk about the tournament so far.

Corey Graves previews tonight's matches.

Gran Metalik thinks he's the best around and wants to prove it in WWE.

Akira Tozawa knows he's the best here and can't wait to show it.

#### Quarterfinals: Gran Metalik vs. Akira Tozawa

Mexico vs. Japan. Bryan keeps raving over Tozawa's German suplex as they hit the mat for some alternating leg holds. Tozawa doesn't offer a clean break as he kicks Metalik in the ribs, only to get armdragged down. Metalik comes back with a dropkick against the ropes as the fans stay into him.

We get the first of likely multiple suicide dives to put Tozawa against the barricade before it's off to something like a Figure Four. Back up and Tozawa starts with the kicks, earning himself some chants in the process. As you might expect, Tozawa hits his own suicide dive because that's required viewing in a cruiserweight match.

Back in again and they chop it out until Tozawa gets bored and just punches Metalik in the jaw. Well mask but you get the idea. Metalik blasts him with a superkick and a standing shooting star (getting a bit too common as well) gets two. The Metalik Driver is countered into a Saito suplex for two more and Tozawa is stunned.

Tozawa charges into a superkick which just makes him scream more so Metalik sends him outside for the springboard flip dive. Back in again and Tozawa takes him up top for a superplex, only to get reversed into a great looking hurricanrana. The fans would like them to fight forever and Tozawa hits his German suplex for two. Metalik

fights out of another German suplex and hits the Metalik Driver for the pin at 15:48.

**Rating:** B+. If there's one thing I love about this tournament (and there are several) it's how many different match styles they can have. You can have people flying all over the place or working on the mat as fast as anyone in the world or you can have a match like this with two guys both working their own styles but making them mesh together so well that it gives us an entertaining match.

They shake hands post match.

Bryan says he won't be impartial in the next match.

Brian Kendrick knows this might be his last shot.

Kota Ibushi is one of the best in the world and wants to win because he loves wrestling.

#### Quarterfinals: Brian Kendrick vs. Japan

USA vs. Japan. Kendrick invites him to the floor which isn't a common strategy in this tournament. Ibushi doesn't bite but he does kick Kendrick in the head and hits a big dive to take over. Kota misses a kick though and gets his foot caught in the barricade so Kendrick dives in to try for a countout. They're doing a good job here of having Kendrick win any way he can against the younger and more talented Ibushi.

More kicks have Kendrick in trouble so he grabs a neckbreaker across the turnbuckle rod for a unique counter. Brian grabs a cravate to stay on the bad (and surgically repaired) neck, only to eat a dropkick to put both guys down. A middle rope moonsault gets two for Ibushi but Kendrick superkicks his head off to get them back to even. Sliced Bread #2 gets another near fall for Kendrick so Ibushi gives him a release German superplex from just off the corner to knock Brian silly.

Kendrick tries the Bully Choke but Ibushi turns to the side to make it a regular chinlock. A Burning Hammer of all things makes Ibushi's neck even worse, though not enough to put him away. Ibushi misses a middle rope Phoenix splash and another Bully Choke has Ibushi in

trouble. He breaks the hold with a rollup though and the Golden Star Bomb finally ends Brian's run at 13:57.

**Rating:** B. I thought the first match was more entertaining but this one told a better story. This was all about Kendrick throwing everything he had at Ibushi but not being able to put him away and eventually falling to the better man. The neck injury was a good bonus to the story and gave Brian enough of an opening to make this interesting. The storytelling was carrying this and it was very entertaining as a result. Good stuff here and Kendrick continues to surprise me in this thing.

Daniel cries as he talks about Brian's run being over.

After the preview for next week's show, Daniel comes to the ring to hug Kendrick to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A-. As is so often the case, I'm not sure what else you could want from this show every week. The wrestling, the storytelling and the action are all there, along with some emotion this week from Brian and Bryan. The final could wind up being a match of the year candidate in case we haven't had enough greatness in the preliminaries. If you're not watching this show, I don't know what else you're waiting for as it's one of the best things every single week.

### Results

Gran Metalik b. Akira Tozawa – Metalik Driver

Kota Ibushi b. Brian Kendrick – Gold Star Bomb

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# Cruiserweight Classic – August 17, 2016: Where My Eyebrows Go Up

## Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 17, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

If last week is any indication, this should be one of the most entertaining shows all week. We're into the second round now and already know two of the names in the final eight. Tonight that more than doubles with three matches advertised at the end of last week's show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's great show and a preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Jack Gallagher is still very British.

Akira Tozawa will never give up or back down. I believe these are the same vignettes from the first round with clips of their first round matches added in.

### Second Round: Jack Gallagher vs. Akira Tozawa

England vs. Japan. They trade wristlocks to start until Tozawa takes him to the mat and works on the leg. Gallagher reverses into an Indian Deathlock (with wrestling expert Daniel Bryan telling us that it's also called a British Figure Four) so Tozawa puts him on the mat with a headlock. That's fine with Jack as he gets up into a headstand and walks backwards to escape. Fans: "HE'S SO DAPPER!"

Somehow Gallagher ties Tozawa's limbs together into a ball. I'm not sure if Tozawa can't get out or doesn't realize Gallagher isn't there but he realizes it when Jack gives him a running kick. A frustrated Tozawa takes him to the mat in a chinlock and drops a



backsplash to slow Jack down a bit. Gallagher gets the closest thing he can be to ticked off and ties the leg up on the mat. Tozawa finally gets smart and kicks him in the face but that just earns him another leg lock.

Back up and Tozawa hits a running boot to the chest but the leg means he can't cover quickly enough. Tozawa tries a suplex but is smoothly taken down into a heel hook. Gallagher immediately lets go when Tozawa gets the rope, only to have Tozawa fall down on an Irish whip attempt. Tozawa seems to be goldbricking though and starts firing off kicks until Gallagher headbutts him in the chest. A deadlift German suplex sends Gallagher crashing into the mat though and that's enough for the pin at 11:38.

**Rating:** B+. As good as the wrestling was here, the commentary deserves so much praise in this match. Bryan and Ranallo did a perfect job of pointing out the differences in styles and treated it as a showdown of two very different wrestlers. The people in the ring then played their roles perfectly and I had a great time watching this match. Just a lot of fun in a wrestling match here and that's what I love about this show.

Hoho Lun has known what he wanted to do since he was eight years old.

Noam Dar is ready to go despite being the youngest man in this tournament and can submit anyone. "Everyone's leg bends the same."

#### Second Round: Noam Dar vs. Hoho Lun

Scotland vs. Hong Kong. They trade wristlocks to start with Dar getting the better of it before starting in on the leg with a dragon screw leg whip. A belly to back gets two for Dar so Lun kicks him in the head for the same. The fans' chant here: saying DAR over and over again to the tune of Darth Vader's theme song. Dar kicks him down again and we hit something like a half crab. Lun gets up and hits a missile dropkick with the knee giving out in a hurry. A Michinoku Driver gets two on Dar but he pulls Lun down into the kneebar (with kicks to the back) for the submission at 7:02.

**Rating:** C. Still good here but the time hurt them. That being said, there's only so much you can do with a story of taking apart someone's leg and then using submissions to make them give up. It's a simple idea and not something you can really stretch out that far. Dar has had a nice run but odds are he gets Zack Sabre Jr. in the

next round so this is probably it for him.

Tony Nese is very athletic and should have been here a long time ago.

Brian Kendrick is a veteran looking for one more shot.

### Second Round: Tony Nese vs. The Brian Kendrick

USA vs. USA. Nese doesn't play around and just blasts Kendrick in the face with a kick in the first fifteen seconds. Kendrick is knocked outside but Nese is right there to chop him some more. Back in and Nese somehow gets his hand caught in the turnbuckle pad, allowing Kendrick to get in his first offense. Nese ducks under a clothesline and comes back with some legdrops for two.

Kendrick realizes he has to get crafty by tying Nese's arm around the ropes and cranking away on a seated armbar. A cross armbreaker makes things worse for Nese and a Fujiwara Armbar makes Nese scream. Bryan gives a very impassioned speech about how he and Kendrick lived together and trained together which helped make Bryan the wrestler he was. Nese gets back up and sends Kendrick outside for a running dive over the top.

Back in and Nese easily wins a slugout before a Falcon Arrow gets two. Nese gets pulled off the top for two off a nasty crash but he comes right back with a buckle bomb for two. Brian isn't done yet either as he grabs that Bully Choke until Nese pumphandles him into a sitout powerslam for two more. Now Nese is getting frustrated so Kendrick just unloads with headbutts and a leg lariat. Kendrick gets kicked off the top but is still able to avoid a 450 and grab the Bully Choke for the tap out at 14:38.

**Rating:** B. That ending made my eyebrows go up as I was actually surprised by the finish. They told a really good story here with Kendrick being overmatched by the more athletic and younger Nese but hanging in there just long enough to catch Nese in a mistake. Good stuff here and that's all you can ask for with a match like this.

**Overall Rating:** B+. It's not as good as last week but that's not a fair comparison to make. The opener was really good and the other two matches ranged from just fine to a surprise, giving us three more strong matches to go with last week's two great ones. The final three rounds could produce some classics if these matches are any indication and I'm really excited to see where they go from here.

## Results

Akira Tozawa b. Jack Gallagher – German suplex

Noam Dar b. Hoho Lun – Kneebar

Brian Kendrick b. Tony Nese – Bully Choke

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# **Cruiserweight Classic – July 20, 2016: More Classic**

## **Cruiserweight Classic**

Date: July 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

It's week two and therefore time for more first round matches. Last week's show was entertaining stuff as they're going with a very different vibe this time around. It's rather cool to see a lot of the unknowns getting shots, even if a lot of them have almost no chance of winning the thing. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Mauro welcomes us to the show and congratulates Bryan on his new role in WWE, though no specific spot is mentioned.

Corey Graves introduces a recap of last week's show and introduces

tonight's matches.

#### First Round: Tajiri vs. Damien Slater

Japan vs. Australia. Tajiri starts fast and sends Slater into the ropes as they're still feeling each other out in the early going. Slater kicks him in the ribs and Bryan is right there to say kicking with Tajiri is a bad idea. Instead they fight over some wristlocks with Tajiri hammering him down with some elbows.

More kicks sets up an armbar on Slater but he makes the ropes and sends Tajiri outside for a slingshot corkscrew dive. Back in and Tajiri grabs a wristlock to slow down Slater's offense. That's so simple but actually smart at the same time. I mean it didn't work but it was smart. A running knee to the head gets two for Slater. Tajiri gets in even more kicks and grabs a quick Tarantula, followed by the handspring elbow. The Buzzsaw Kick puts Slater away at 5:49.

**Rating:** C. Tajiri was one of my favorites in ECW and it's a good sign that he's basically the same wrestler that he was back in the day (albeit a bit slower). Sometimes it's easier to just kick someone in the head over and over. Slater wasn't the flashiest guy out there but he looked very confident in the basic stuff he was doing.

TJ Perkins is the wrestler who makes everything look good.

Da Mack wants to be the Michael Jackson of professional wrestling. Take that for what it's worth.

#### First Round: Da Mack vs. TJ Perkins

Germany vs. Philippines and both guys seem cocky. Mack's dancing draws an Alex Wright reference. Perkins takes him down with a dropkick and a headscissors with some dancing that Bryan (nor myself) can identify. Mack catches him with a palm strike but Perkins dances into a Boston crab with Perkins lifting him up by the arms. The threat of a Muta Lock (bridging Indian Deathlock with a chinlock) sends Mack over to the ropes and he's able to pull TJ to the floor.

Naturally that means a big flip dive, followed by some dancing stomps back inside. Now the Muta Lock has Mack in trouble but he's right in front of the ropes. Mack is back up and runs the corner for a spinning kick to the face, only to have the landing delay the cover. Perkins is right back up with a slingshot dropkick but he

misses a 450. Not that it matters as some kicks to the head set up a kneebar to make Mack tap at 6:30.

**Rating:** B-. They packed a lot into a short amount of time and it was a much different style than the first match. This was all about the high flying with some submission stuff thrown in for some flavor. Mack looked like almost any high flying indy name but Perkins looked like a much more versatile and polished wrestler. Not great but entertaining enough.

Mustafa Ali says he's the most well rounded wrestler in the tournament.

Lince Dorado, a masked man, talks about wrestling around the world and being ready to face anyone.

#### First Round: Mustafa Ali vs. Lince Dorado

Pakistan vs. Puerto Rico. Ali doesn't want to shake hands but eventually does so to get us going. Dorado headscissors him out to the floor but gets pulled outside as well, setting up a running knee from the apron. A knee to the back gets two on Dorado but he kicks Ali in the face. Dorado isn't done as he headscissors Ali to the floor, setting up the longest Asai Moonsault I've ever seen. Back in and a springboard reverse hurricanrana (it sounds better than it looks) gets two on Ali, who comes right back with a springboard Spanish Fly for the same. Ali misses a 450 though and a shooting star gives Dorado the pin at 5:53.

**Rating:** B+. Take two guys and let them fly all over the place for a few minutes. It worked back in WCW and it's still going to work today. This was easily the most entertaining thing so far with two guys who both got to show off a lot. I've seen Dorado before but Ali looked a lot better than I was expecting. Really fun match here and the kind I've been waiting for.

Akira Tozawa is excited to be here.

Kenneth Johnson thinks it's his time.

#### First Round: Akira Tozawa vs. Kenneth Johnson

Japan vs. USA. Again they fight over a wristlock to start until Johnson actually takes him to the mat and works on the leg. A headlock into a headscissors gives us a standoff. Tozawa, the heavy favorite coming in, finally starts getting serious and wins a chop off before just punching Johnson in the jaw.

Johnson takes a hard roaring elbow but comes right back with a dropkick for no cover. There's a double clothesline to put both guys down until Tozawa goes nuts with some forearms to the jaw. Johnson stops him cold with knees to the face and a jackknife cover for two. Kenneth misses a middle rope spinning legdrop though and Tozawa snaps off a hard German suplex for two, followed by a bridging German for the pin at 10:00.

**Rating:** B. Tozawa cranked it up in the end and looked like one of the favorites to win the whole thing. Johnson was the definition of a guy in tights but he held his own here against someone with a lot more experience and skill. There was even a good story here with Tozawa underestimating him and Johnson trying to make the most of it until he was overcome by all the skill and experience. The match was shockingly good and far better than the squash I was expecting.

**Overall Rating:** B+. The last two matches were definitely upgrades over the first two with two flashy, high flying cruiserweight styles matches which is more what I was looking for here. I do however like the multiple styles because they keep the thing from getting stale with the same stuff over and over. Mixing it up is always an appreciated touch and it made the show much more entertaining this week.

### Results

Tajiri b. Damien Slater – Buzzsaw Kick

TJ Perkins b. Da Mack – Kneebar

Lince Dorado b. Mustafa Ali – Shooting Star Press

Akira Tozawa b. Kenneth Johnson – German suplex

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