

Impact Wrestling – April 6, 2017: One Story Can Kill a Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: April 6, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero, Jeremy Borash

We're past Wrestlemania so it's time for the real Orlando wrestlers to take their city back. Last week's show focused on a wide variety of stories, which helped set up a lot of this week's material.

Tonight we have a gauntlet match for the #1 contendership to the Knockouts Title plus a last man standing match between Eddie Edwards and Davey Richards. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Eli Drake vs. Caleb Konley

This starts immediately after the opening sequence with no entrances. Drake sends him outside for a cheap shot from Tyrus, followed by some right hands from Eli back inside. A neckbreaker out of the corner gives Eli two but Caleb comes right back with a rolling palm strike. That actually sends Drake outside for a suicide dive, followed by a high crossbody for no cover. Caleb goes up but Tyrus offers a distraction, allowing Drake to hit White Noise for the pin at 4:05.

Rating: D+. I'm very glad Drake has a better finisher as no one was going to buy a knee lift and clothesline for someone who is supposed to be climbing the card. Drake seems to be just a few months away from rocketing towards the main event (or at least he should be) and changing finishers was the right call. Not the worst match here and it's a rare instance of just a match to put someone over.

Josh and JB bicker AGAIN, this time focusing on Josh calling JB

ugly. Bruce Prichard comes down and demands that Josh and JB get in the ring. Josh: "I'm sorry I said I wished you were dead!" Bruce says everyone is sick of hearing from these guys so he's got a solution. They're both going to pick a team and we'll see who knows the most. I hope that means the loser is off commentary.

Gauntlet Match

This is basically a Royal Rumble with the final two having a regular match where the winner gets a future title shot. Ava Storie is in at #1 and Madison Rayne is in at #2, complete with the Killer Queen song. That goes nowhere so after the first one minute interval, Rebel is in at #3. Storie runs them both over with a double clothesline and Amanda Rodriguez is in at #4.

The two newcomers slug it out with no one even attempting an elimination. M.J. Jenkins is in at #5 as the announcers just act like we should know who all these new people are. Diamante from LAX is in at #6 and Rodriguez is the first one eliminated. ODB is in at #7 and sends the other five into the corner for a huge splash.

Storie is put out after a pretty solid performance and Brandi Rhodes completes the field at #8. Brandi gets rid of Diamante and Jenkins eliminates Rebel. ODB and Brandi double team Jenkins out but Madison tosses Brandi a second later. That leaves ODB vs. Rayne for the title shot and it's now pin or submission. Not that it lasts long or anything though as ODB hits a quick Bam for the win at 9:21.

Rating: F. Yeah this was horrible and there's no way around it. I have no idea who half the wrestlers in this match were and commentary would rather talk about Josh being married to Madison than tell us ANYTHING about these people. To be fair though, TNA fans have proven that they'll watch anything this company presents so they might as well fill the shows with cheap talent.

Here's James Storm for a chat. During his entrance, Josh says he won a coin toss to determine who gets to make the first pick. So wait: do they get to pick anyone they want or do the people have to agree? Earlier tonight it was implied that the announcers have to pick the teams with JB saying Josh didn't have enough friends to fill a

lineup. Anyway, Storm says the Cowboy is back and it's time for him to become World Champion again.

Cue Bram and Kingston to rant about Storm lying to them about the DCC. Storm says he picked the music and bought the suits while Kingston was the one begging for a job. Kingston spits in Storm's face and takes a Last Call. Bram loads up a chair shot but gets stared down. Another Last Call sends the chair into Bram's face and Storm hits the catchphrase.

Andrew Everett thinks he's earned an X-Division Title match. Gregory Helms and Trevor Lee come up to say Everett can have a shot if he wins his triple threat tonight.

Andrew Everett vs. Marshe Rockett vs. Suicide

Everett kicks Rockett to the floor as the announcers KEEP GOING about their upcoming tag match before switching over to fantasy baseball. This is the kind of stuff you expect from One Night Only shows. Suicide knocks Andrew to the floor and follows with the falling dive. Back in and Rockett stomps on Everett before powerslamming him out of the air.

Everett sends both of them to the floor again and follows with a corkscrew dive. Suicide grabs something like a Black Widow on Everett as the announcers argue over whether Al Snow should have Pope's job. A kick sends Suicide to the floor and Everett hits a shooting star for the pin on Rockett at 6:24.

Rating: C. I like the fact that they're actually building someone up as a challenger for a title match down the line and for once there's an actual story in this division. I have no confidence in them to follow up on all this stuff but at least we've got something brewing for now, which is more than they've done in a long time.

Davey Richards vs. Eddie Edwards

Last Man Standing and Eddie jumps Davey in the aisle. Eddie knocks him into the barricade and follows with two suicide dives as they quickly head into the crowd. Davey gets crotched on a barricade but ducks a dive, sending Eddie crashing into a garbage can for a good

looking spot. Richards gets in a few kicks, stops to kiss Angelina Love, and grabs a chair.

Angelina throws in two more chairs with Davey setting the two of them up in the middle. Josh's response: "I have my third member!" Eddie uses another kiss distraction to powerbomb Davey through the chairs for a six count. Not that it matters as Eddie grabs even more chairs (bringing the total up to at least six) and pelts one at Davey's head. Eddie piles the chairs up but Angelina grabs the foot, allowing Davey to superplex Edwards onto the pile. We see Eddie's wife Alisha Edwards in the front row for some trash talk with Angelina.

Back from a break with Davey hitting Eddie in the head with a chain wrapped fist but Alisha's cheers bring Eddie back to his feet. Rapid fire chops have Davey in trouble and a belly to belly into the corner makes things even worse. A baseball slide sends a chair into Davey's face and Eddie wraps a chair around Davey's neck.

The top rope double stomp somehow doesn't kill Davey so the women get into it, resulting in a chair taking Alisha down. Eddie gets chaired as well so Davey wraps a chain around his foot but stops with second thoughts. Angelina tells him to do it for her and Creeping Death with the chain ends Eddie at 22:43.

Rating: B+. This got the time that it needed and the violence was more than enough to make it work. These two beat the heck out of each other and made it look like they wanted to kill each other. Now the problem is they need to let the feud end here instead of just continuing it for the sake of continuing it, which gets old in a hurry.

We get a video on Veterans of War involving Operation Iraqi Freedom. I believe one of them was Gunner, who is a former member of the military.

JB wants to make Impact Wrestling great.

LAX celebrates their title win.

We look at James Storm updating his theme music in a studio.

Alberto El Patron vs. Jon Bolen

A few kicks have Bolen in trouble but he grabs a powerslam. That's about it for his offense though as Alberto sends him into the corner for the top rope double stomp and the pin at 1:18.

Post match Alberto calls out Lashley.

Allie/Braxton Sutter and KM/Sienna are getting into it again when Karen Jarrett comes in to break it up. They'll have a mixed tag next week.

Fury is unleashed next week and has something to do with Sutter and Allie.

Bruce Prichard is out to moderate the picking of the teams, which really is how they're closing the show. Josh goes first and picks Lashley while JB picks Alberto El Patron. Next up we have Bram for Josh and JB picks Chris Adonis (Masters). There's nothing in between these picks save for a little arguing here and there. Josh goes with Eli Drake and Tyrus helps Josh's team beat down the good guys. Matt Morgan comes out for the save and gets in a staredown with Lashley as someone else gets out of a limo. We're out of time though so go to Impact's website to find out who the last team member is (it's Magnus).

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show where one thing really does bring the whole thing down. We had a great gimmick match and some stuff involving the World Title but what closes the show? Bickering announcers. Can you imagine if Cole vs. Lawler closed a show instead of something involving John Cena?

This show also gave a great illustration of the problem with announcers as major characters: it was the main thing we heard about all night long. The stuff in the ring got almost no focus because we had to hear about how great Josh was and how JB didn't want to hear about it. I'm going to assume Josh winds up being some big heel manager (which wouldn't be the worst idea in the world) but DANG this story is ruining some good stuff on the show. Big step down from last week here and it's almost all because of one story.

Results

Eli Drake b. Caleb Konley – White Noise

ODB won a gauntlet match last eliminating Madison Rayne

Andrew Everett b. Marshe Rockett and Suicide – Shooting star press to Rockett

Davey Richards b. Eddie Edwards – Creeping Death with a chain around the boot

Alberto El Patron b. Jon Bolen – Top rope double stomp

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<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Impact Wrestling – March 16, 2017: Can We Make It Good First?

Impact Wrestling

Date: March 16, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Jeremy Borash, Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

Take two. Last week's relaunch of Impact Wrestling didn't get the

best reception but it should be interesting to see where things go this week. The big story coming out of last week is Alberto El Patron winning the World Title, only to vacate it due to the controversial way in which he won the belt. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's show. I think it might have used to work with WWE and it remembers when things were great before the fans left. The World Title gets more focus than anything else with Josh talking over everything a close second.

Opening sequence.

Here's Alberto for a chat. He loves it here because he doesn't need to pretend to be something he's not. Here he can be El Patron and THIS IS HIS HOUSE (that's one way to get Paige to break up with you). Last week he proved to everyone that he deserves to be the champion. He's not here to be a talker though because he'd rather fight. That means a challenge to Lashley but it's Ethan Carter III instead. Ethan knows how difficult it was to relinquish that title but if Alberto wants it back, he needs to earn it. Tonight, let's make it Si vs. 3.

Alberto says no but Ethan calls him out for not wanting to fight. That's still a no because El Patron is here to fight the big dog. Ethan shoves him down and a fight breaks out with security breaking it up. That's FINALLY enough for the match to be accepted. Now why in the world did this not happen LAST WEEK? If El Patron can beat Carter, at least it sets him up as a title contender instead of just throwing in another WWE reject to the main event.

Eddie Edwards talks about how he wants to make Impact great.

We go to a meeting with Bruce Prichard, Dutch Mantel and two other people who seem to have authority. Ignore last week when Mantel flat out said he was NOT an authority figure. Basically they don't know how Decay got the Tag Team Titles (they don't know their own stories) but Prichard knows how to figure it out.

JB gets a phone call telling him that EC3 vs. El Patron is on tonight, much to Josh's annoyance.

Video on the history of Tyrus and Eli Drake. There's enough between them for a history package?

Laredo Kid/Garza Jr. vs. Eli Drake/Tyrus

Kid and Garza are from the Crash promotion in Mexico and this is

their debut. Drake and the Kid start things off with Laredo snapping off a headscissors. Josh mocks JB for wanting to talk about the international partnerships before it's off to Garza. Eli misses a charge and falls out to the floor for a suicide dive. That's followed by a moonsault to the floor from Laredo but Tyrus knocks the Kid out of the air.

Back from a break with Laredo getting thrown across the ring in a good looking Tyrus suplex. Drake drops a jumping elbow but takes too much time talking, allowing Garza to come in off the hot tag. Eli takes him down as well but accidentally hits Tyrus. That means there's no one to tag, allowing Garza to grab a rollup on Drake for the pin at 11:03.

Rating: C-. Hey, did you know that Garza and Kid are from Crash? Ignore the fact that maybe fourteen people watching this show have heard of Crash outside of the Hardys going there a few weeks ago of course. Garza and Kid were fine but nothing that hasn't been done several times before.

Josh says that was stupid.

Video on Eddie Edwards, Moose and James Storm appearing for Pro Wrestling Noah as part of the new talent exchange. To TNA's credit, this is pretty impressive and WAY better than their agreement with Wrestle-1.

Kayci Quinn vs. Brandi Rhodes

Quinn is making her debut. We hear about Brandi's education, which includes degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Miami. Not bad. And never mind as Cody comes out to say this isn't happening. Cody isn't happy with Impact Wrestling pimping out the Rhodes name because he's going to do it instead. He tries to give Quinn \$45 ("It's \$20 more than they were going to pay you.") before moving on to Moose. Cody: "Moose claims that he's in Japan. I AM JAPAN!" Cody wants Moose back here for the Grand Championship. Brandi tries to apologize to Quinn as they leave.

Back from a break with Rosemary destroying Quinn. Thankfully this gives the announcers another chance to argue while Quinn is looked at. JB says law and order is coming soon.

Ethan Carter III wants to make Impact great.

Ethan Carter III vs. Alberto El Patron

I'm surprised this isn't the main event. Patron gets in a quick dropkick to the back for two and they're already on the floor. We take a break a minute in and come back with Carter punching him out of the air and stomping away in the corner. Carter says this is HIS house and they head outside again with El Patron sending the arm into the post and steps. Back in and Patron cranks on the arm but has to shove away the 1%er. A backdrop sends Patron to the floor and Carter rams him into the announcers' table for good measure. Back in and Patron enziguris him off the apron to send us to a second break. We come back with Carter winning a slugout but getting caught in a Backstabber. Patron misses the top rope stomp though and the TK3 knocks him silly. There's no cover though as Carter hits a second TK3 for no cover again. Instead he goes to grab a chair but changes his mind, allowing El Patron to grab the cross armbreaker for the tap at 21:50.

Rating: B-. NOW WHY DIDN'T THEY DO THIS LAST WEEK??? Patron wins a long match by beating someone who is still a big star which should put him into the title picture. Now it would feel right to have him face Lashley for the belt but as usual they did the whole thing backwards. Also it would have been nice to have a good match on the relaunch show instead of the messy Alberto vs. Lashley match but again, why go with what makes sense?

Alberto applauds Carter and says that was one of the best matches of his career. Carter takes a few seconds but shakes Alberto's hand.

Reno Scum says they're here for the titles and call themselves the perfect combination of athleticism and violence. That took twenty seconds and told me more than I learned about them all of last week.

Ethan is frustrated in the back but Bruce Prichard gets in his face and shouts a bunch of stuff we can't hear.

Madison Rayne wants to make Impact great again.

JB says "she" is going to be here next week.

X-Division Title: Trevor Lee vs. Andrew Everett vs. Braxton Sutter vs. Suicide

Lee is defending and this is one fall to a finish. And yes, they brought back SUICIDE because that character was begging for a revival. Allie is here with Sutter but Shane Helms seems to have lost his Gregory in the relaunch. The champ gets triple teamed to

start and we hit the heavily choreographed sequence where no one can make any contact because it's well rehearsed.

Suicide dropkicks Everett and bulldogs Sutter for two. Pope goes on a rant against Suicide because they had a falls count anywhere match back in the day but the mask kept Pope from knowing when he was hurt. We get a nice fake out with Suicide teasing diving onto Everett but instead falling backwards onto the other two. Everett hits a big springboard shooting star onto all three as we take a break.

Back with Josh plugging Schitt's Creek and Everett eating a Superman Punch. Lee gets powerslammed so Everett goes up top, only to have Lee get caught on Sutter's shoulders for a Tower of Doom. Cue Laurel Van Ness (still in the wedding clothes) to distract Sutter though and a jumping knee to Braxton's head retains Trevor's title at 12:50.

Rating: C. I am so sick of the X-Division doing the same stuff over and over. How many times have you seen the exact same stuff over and over with the title having no real story to it? Oh and well done on capitalizing on Sutter and Allie being the hottest thing in the promotion by having Allie just be a valet and Sutter taking the fall here when you have freaking Suicide right there.

Post match Sienna comes out to warn Allie and Sutter of upcoming pain. Laurel is very pleased.

Moose wants to make Impact great again. I get what they're going for here but maybe they should stop talking about how great it's going to be and actually do something great.

Here's Bruce Prichard to address the Tag Team Title situation. See, titles are won and lost in the ring, not in space and time (The Hardys won the matches in wrestling rings you nitwit. If you're going to call a story stupid, at least get the details right.). Josh points out that Bruce took the title from Alberto in a board room on Monday but of course that's not brought up elsewhere. Anyway the titles will be decided in two weeks but here's Decay to interrupt. They rescued the titles from space and time so they should just be handed the belts now.

Prichard looks terrified of Rosemary but here's Reno Scum to cut them off. Garza Jr. and Laredo Kid come out to say they want the belts too and a brawl breaks out. Decay stands tall but here's LAX

(Homicide and Konnan) for the big return, followed by three more members coming in from behind to help in the big beatdown. Konnan says they're serious "like a late period" to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was better than last week but not by much. Let's get the good things out of the way first: Josh was WAY less annoying this time around and that makes the biggest difference in the world. He was still doing the heel schtick here but it was far less annoying and felt more like a heel I can get annoyed by rather than one that's ruining the show. Keep it around this level and he could be valuable down the road.

Second, they had a good match. Alberto vs. Ethan wasn't anything great or a masterpiece of any sort but it got time, told a story and was entertaining. It gives El Patron some more credibility and should set him up for a rematch with Lashley, though I have a feeling they'll wait until Slammiversary because a former WWE star (a company they barely mentioned this week for another positive) deserves that kind of a spot you see.

As for the negatives...there are still a lot of them. The X-Division is as worthless as it was before (though the match wasn't bad) and Allie and Braxton went from the most popular people in the company to just more names on a list but one problem outshines them all: these new people aren't interesting. Reno Scum are every "we're violent and a bit crazy" team I can ever remember and the luchadors might as well have been named Uno and Dos. Maybe they'll grow on me over time but I really see no reason to care about them.

That brings me to LAX, which was an interesting choice for a big surprise reveal. They got a nice reaction from the crowd but do you really want to bring in part of an act that was a big deal ten years ago? It could be interesting to see where they go but I've never been a big Homicide fan in the first place.

The show was far less bad but it's still really not very interesting. Like I said, the company needs to stop talking about how great things used to be/how great they will be and start doing something great. There are interesting things going on but this weird mix of new people who aren't interesting and the leftovers from the old era isn't working yet, though it's still early.

Results

Laredo Kid/Garza Jr. b. Eli Drake/Tyrus – Rollup to Drake

Alberto El Patron b. Ethan Carter III – Cross armbreaker

Trevor Lee b. Andrew Everett, Braxton Sutter and Suicide – Knee to Sutter's head

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Impact Wrestling – March 9, 2017: Well That Was Certainly Something

Impact Wrestling

Date: March 9, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: D'Angelo Dinero, Josh Matthews

It's a major, major show this week as TNA completely relaunches (again), this time with Jeff Jarrett back at the helm for the first time in a long time. That means almost everything changes and it's really hard to tell what's coming. Lashley is still World Champion and it's going to be interesting to see what else is still around. Let's get to it.

We open with a package of the company's history, including stuff all the way back from the weekly PPV days. Nearly everything gets a look and it's actually quite the history package. Unfortunately it's also a good example of how much potential TNA has had, only to squander so much of it.

There's also a new opening sequence, featuring a closeup of an owl. Anthem, I know you put in some serious money but no one cares about the parent company.

Davey Richards and Eddie Edwards (in street clothes) are brawling in the crowd to start and agents have some issues breaking it up.

Josh Matthews isn't happy with a third headset at the booth.

Matthews: "THIS ISN'T SMACKDOWN!" Jeremy Borash comes out to join commentary and Josh goes into full on heel mode as he tries to throw Jeremy out. Borash talks about how we need a change so he's here to join the lineup. He goes on about Mike Tenay handing him the torch (Matthews throws his feet on the desk and looks annoyed) and then three years ago, someone was fired from WWE.

People here looked at him (Matthews) and said THIS is what a commentator looks like. Matthews talks about broadcasting Wrestlemania from the Georgia Dome but Borash thinks the lead play by play announcer should be someone who respect wrestling. This is going on WAY too long and it's not a good sign when the second segment is battling announcers.

Cody and Brandi Rhodes interrupt the fight with Cody holding the GFW Nex-Gen Title. We get a poll about seeing Cody vs. Moose tonight and the fans seem interested but no announcement is made.

Here's the DCC as JB says Cody knows Moose is in Japan, triggering an argument with Matthews.

DCC vs. Reno Scum

Scum are Luster and Adam who come to the ring with their Future Stars of Wrestling Tag Team Titles (not on the line here). It's Bram and Kingston starting things off as the announcers bicker some more, this time over who is responsible for the new referee's shirts. Oh

but now let's stop to admire Josh's suit, as in taking the camera off of the ring.

The match has been going on for about two minutes now and we might have spent ten seconds talking about the action. Luster catches a diving Bram in a spinebuster and a top rope double stomp gives Adam the pin at 2:26. I have no idea who Reno Scum are but I do know about Josh's fashion sense and that's what matters the most.

We recap the wedding and Laurel Van Ness' breakdown as a result.

Sienna yells at the new interviewer and says Maria has suffered a nervous breakdown from the wedding and is gone. Sienna is coming for Maria.

Braxton Sutter vs. Marshe Rockett vs. Caleb Konley vs. DJZ

Only Sutter gets an entrance and it takes about a minute of action to actually name everyone. DJZ hits a big dive, leaving Rockett to powerbomb Sutter into the corner. Marshe goes up but dives into a triple dropkick, leaving everyone else to hit random spots. Konley throws DJZ to the floor for a dive before Saito suplexing Sutter. Now it's Rockett cleaning house until Allie dives off the middle rope to crossbody him to the floor. That's rather heelish and it allows Sutter to hit a fisherman's neckbreaker to put DJZ away at 4:23.

Rating: D+. Same X-Division as always here with no psychology, no flow to the match, no reason to care about most of these people and not even a graphic to say who they are. I know who they are but I'm one of the people who stuck with this promotion. This is your big relaunch. Let us know who these people are and why I should care about them instead of bickering announcers.

Post match, Van Ness stumbles out, still wearing her wedding dress and holding the champagne bottles (How are those not empty?).

Sienna vs. Rachel Ellering

Ellering is Paul Ellering's daughter and used to be a low level talent in NXT. Rachel forearm Sienna down to start as Josh is now threatening to beat JB Up in between his sitcom plugs. Pope: "For

goodness sake.” JB gives Rachel’s background and Josh asks “who gives a Schitt’s Creek?”. A trip to the floor doesn’t go anywhere so Sienna forearms her down for two. Rachel gets two off a springboard spinning legdrop and Josh goes on ANOTHER rant about how great he is and insulting JB and Mike Tenay. Josh: “NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE NAMES OF THE MOVES!” Sienna wins with the Silencer at 4:16.

Rating: D. The commentary is already bringing these matches down and that’s not a good thing forty five minutes into the new era. I know I’ve been harping on it all night but that’s the biggest story of the show. Matthews is like the annoying Michael Cole on steroids and there’s no chance for anyone to even talk about the match because Josh is too busy getting this stupid character over. Turn him into a manager or something but stop having him in every match. The wrestling was nothing special as Sienna is only a slightly above average power wrestler and Ellering isn’t much better.

Here’s Bruce Prichard (formerly known as Brother Love) for a chat. Josh: “THIS IS WORSE THAN JB! WHO DUG THIS GUY UP???” He doesn’t remember Impact Wrestling being this way because he remembers people wanting to be great. They were almost there but for whatever reason, it didn’t all happen. This is not a rib but TNA is DEAD.

There are new owners and management, which means we have a new name: Impact Wrestling. These new owners are looking for people who have achieved greatness in the past, like Prichard himself. He was around when names like Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin and John Cena got their start so he knows greatness. Now he brings out Lashley, who talks about beating everyone put in front of him.

Cue Alberto El Patron, who the announcers put over as a big deal. Unfortunately the crowd doesn’t put him over as that big of a deal, though the SI chant is pretty loud. Alberto calls him a perro but here’s Ethan Carter III to cut him off. Carter wants a shot but Del Rio is given a title shot instead as Prichard can just make decisions like that.

JB gets a news break from backstage and apparently a legend, who has never been on the show before, is backstage.

Eddie Edwards is tired of Davey Richards being like this when Angelina Love comes in to say that Eddie forgot about Davey. She married a real man and slaps Eddie. Edwards chuckles and asks why the real man's wife hits harder than he does.

Josh talks about how no one checked on him when he was injured and that's about it until Cody comes out again to ask about Moose. JB explains that Moose is in Japan so Cody throws the Nex-Gen Title in the ring and says he's waiting. Cody gets in the ring but jumps right back out and goes into the crowd. Josh wants to know where Moose is and ignores the Japan stuff.

The new ad campaign is Make Impact Great, with Lashley saying we need to rise together. Ok then.

Here's Dutch Mantell on his scooter in full Zeb Colter attire.

Dutch: "My name is Ze...can't say that!" He was Zeb Colter in an alternate universe and he's been in wrestling for over forty years. Colter has been all over the world and wrestling too him there. He's in love with professional wrestling and he doesn't know what he would do without it. TNA has been taken over by Impact Wrestling and now he's going to try to make it great (not great again mind you).

Mantell was here eight years ago and saw names like AJ Styles, Samoa Joe, Bobby Roode, Sting, Kurt Angle, Kevin Nash and Booker T. but they all slowly drifted away. Dutch talked to all these guys and they left because of a lack of leadership and vision. Then the fans left (he calls them paying customers, which is kind of a stretch) and the new owners knew the people had to come back. Mantell isn't an authority figure or a boss but rather someone giving advice. The people are his boss and he's wrapping it up by asking everyone to put their hand over their hearts and pledge to make Impact great (the old WE THE PEOPLE thing).

And now, the Hardys wrestle/box a kangaroo. The rest of the show being more serious really does show how stupid a lot of this seems. After Jeff escapes a headlock, it's time for an Expedition of Gold. They disappear...and we cut to Decay who now have the titles. Steve says the Hardys are now deleted, which suggests that they beat them

off camera. It's not as good as just filming a quick title change but this is WAY better than stripping the Hardys of the belts and crowning new champions. WAY better.

JB announces Slammiversary on July 2, sending Josh into a rant about how Borash making the announcement will cut down the PPV sales.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Alberto El Patron vs. Lashley

Lashley is defending. Josh asks Pope if El Patron is going to be thrown off by the six sided ring but thankfully JB is there to say the six sided ring was invented in Mexico, meaning El Patron has a ton of experience. Pope gets in a good response by saying all the experience in the world doesn't matter when you're facing someone like Lashley. Nice little exchange there but it might be due to how horrible commentary has been all night.

Lashley takes him down in the corner to start and chokes with the boot before they head outside. Patron's few strikes don't work as Lashley knocks him outside again. A suplex gets two but it's too early for the spear as Alberto dropkicks him down. The cross armbreaker over the ropes has Lashley in trouble and here Ethan Carter III to watch. Back from a break with Alberto making his comeback, only to have the ref get bumped.

Del Rio gets the cross armbreaker as a second referee comes in. Lashley powerbombs his way out of the hold (Pope: "HAYSTACKS CALHOUN WHAT A SLAM!") and gets two off a spinebuster. The second referee is bumped and Lashley hits a second spinebuster. Lashley goes to get the belt but Alberto knocks it into the champ's face for the pin and the title at 17:41.

Rating: D+. This was basically the WWE main event style and I'm really not wild about seeing that over and over again. It's not a bad match or anything but having someone show up and win the title the night of their debut isn't the best idea in the world, especially when it's someone as uninteresting as Patron. At least the match was watchable though and Patron seems to be a face, which is the more interesting version.

The referees huddle and Lashley is livid as El Patron leaves to end the show. There's a good chance that's getting overturned.

Overall Rating: D. Well that was....that was certainly something. This show was a mess and I think I'm being nice when I say that's all it was. The wrestling ranged from feeling rushed to bad to overbooked, which is partially due to how much new stuff was thrown at us. There were several new names introduced and it seemed like we were just supposed to know who they were. Most of them weren't anything special and the big name was someone most fans will be familiar with but a little more time introducing them would have been nice.

That brings us to the big problem I've harped on all night: Josh freaking Matthews. Now first of all: THANK GOODNESS they brought JB in and didn't have this be a two man booth as that would have been nothing short of a disaster. However, Matthews completely took over the show and made it very hard to focus on anything else. Those kind of commentators rarely work and it's a shame that he seems to just be a Michael Cole knockoff after Cole was so irritating in his heel run. Watch some Paul Heyman or Jerry Lawler and see how to do this properly or don't do it at all.

Overall, it felt like they were moving too fast and it became a problem. They tried to squeeze in WAY too much in one night and that's going to catch up with you in a hurry. This isn't something you can nail in one night so it's going to take a few weeks to really see if something works. I've already lost a lot of my optimism but the best thing on the show: it FLEW by instead of the old TNA shows which felt like they lasted about fourteen hours each. Not a good show here but there's time to iron out a lot of the kinks.

Results

Reno Scum b. DCC – Top rope double stomp to Bram

Braxton Sutter b. DJZ, Marshe Rockett and Caleb Konley – Fisherman's neckbreaker to DJZ

Sienna b. Rachel Ellering – Silencer

Alberto El Patron b. Lashley – Belt to the head

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the History of the WWE's Big Four Pay Per Views, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/01/27/kbs-reviews-now-available-in-paperback/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Ring of Honor TV – May 18, 2016: Six In A Row

Ring of Honor

Date: May 18, 2016

Host: Kevin Kelly

It's the week after Global Wars, meaning we should be getting some fresh storyline stuff instead of all the New Japan stuff that has dominated more than a month of shows now. Ring of Honor is fine on its own and can go without having all the stuff from the outsiders over and over again. Let's get to it.

And never mind as this is going to be a special episode entirely devoted to Jay Lethal. Well at least he's a Ring of Honor wrestler.

Opening sequence.

Kevin Kelly talks about how Lethal has been a champion for over two years straight, which stated at Supercard of Honor VIII (hey I was there) when he turned heel and joined Truth Martini to become TV Champion. We see the end of his match against Tommaso Ciampa to win

the title.

After a quick highlight reel, we go to the 13th Anniversary Show (as in eleven months after Lethal won the title) with Lethal defending against Alberto El Patron.

TV Title: Jay Lethal vs. Alberto El Patron

Lethal is defending of course. Alberto superkicks Donovan Dijak to start and takes Lethal out to the floor for early control. A top rope clothesline drops Jay and we're already in a chinlock. Back up and Lethal crotches him in the corner to take over for the first time. The referee actually calls it accidental, which makes me want to see what intentional would be.

Truth Martini chokes Alberto a bit but Jay gets caught in the cross armbreaker over the top rope. We take a break and come back with El Patron countering a cross armbreaker from the champion, only to be clotheslined out to the floor. The announcers talk about the KRD (Knights of the Rising Dawn, a masked group at the time) leaving, even though we didn't see them in the first place. To be fair this was aired on pay per view so there was no break live.

Jay hits three straight suicide dives to send Alberto over the barricade and the champ takes a breather on the inside. Patron sends him into the corner though and the top rope double stomp gets two. Back up and they slug it out until the Lethal Combination gets two. The top rope elbow (Hail to the King) is blocked but Alberto has to put Matrini in the cross armbreaker.

Jay tries another elbow but Patron counters into the armbreaker, only to have Truth offer a distraction so Jay can hit him in the head with the Book of Truth for two. Alberto grabs the Codebreaker on the arm, only to eat a bicycle kick. Jay's arm gives out when he tries the Lethal Injection so Truth blasts Alberto with the book, setting up the Lethal Injection for the pin at 12:33 (original match time).

Rating: B-. Certainly not bad here and a win over a former WWE World Champion is certainly a good rub for Lethal. The book cheating is still annoying but at least the right guy won and Lethal continues to look awesome. This would be about it for Alberto in Ring of Honor as he was just brought in for the title shot against Jay.

This brings us up to a discussion of Lethal vs. Jay Briscoe for the

undisputed title. Here's their title vs. title match from Best in the World 2015. This is the review from Best of 2015 when more of the match was broadcast.

ROH World Title/TV Title: Jay Briscoe vs. Jay Lethal

They shake hands to start and we're ready to go. The House of Truth tries some early interference and get thrown out to make this one on one. Well two on one as Truth Martini is still at ringside. Lethal drops to the floor twice in a row to start but the fans declare it awesome anyway. Well to be fair that was indeed some AWESOME walking around on the floor. A lockup doesn't go anywhere so they trade wristlocks with both guys challenging, only to have Briscoe take over with a front facelock.

Both guys get back up and it's time for the slugout with Briscoe being sent out to the floor. Lethal follows him out and drives Briscoe into the barricade to keep his control as we take a break. Back with Briscoe kicking Lethal in the head, only to be sent to the floor for a suicide dive. Lethal loads up another but Briscoe decks him with a hard clothesline and a big suicide dive of his own. Martini finally does something by grabbing Briscoe's leg, allowing Lethal to stomp away some more.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Briscoe fights back up and grabs a neckbreaker. Back from another break with the Lethal Combination getting a quick two. The Macho elbow is broken up for a bit, only to have Lethal shove Briscoe off to stop a superplex. Now the elbow gets two but a Koji Clutch is quickly broken up.

They head to the apron with Lethal hitting him low to save himself from a Jay Driller through the table. Well I'd hope he broke it up as it would have meant a bad case of death otherwise. Martini's distraction earns himself an ejection and NOW the Jay Driller puts Lethal through the table as we take a third break.

Back with both guys inside and Briscoe running into a superkick, only to counter the Lethal Injection with a discus lariat. The fans are losing their minds over this stuff, though I'm still getting over the rolling out of the ring earlier. Lethal grabs the Injection out of nowhere for a very close two and Corino can barely keep going. With nothing else working, Lethal grabs a Jay Driller, followed by another Lethal Injection to finally become undisputed champion at 27:13.

Rating: B. The clipped version was good and I'm assuming the full version is even better. Lethal winning clean here, especially after going through the table like that, was a great way to make him look like the top guy in the promotion. Briscoe is pretty easily the most decorated name in the company's history so having him lose a major match like this, especially going down fighting, isn't going to cost him that much. This was good stuff all around and felt like a major showdown so well done all around.

We talk about Lethal defending both titles at the same time until Martini caused him to lose the TV Title to Roderick Strong back in November. We see the end of the title change.

Lethal was still World Champion though and defended the title against AJ Styles at Final Battle 2015. The match is clipped on the broadcast but here's the full version.

Ring of Honor World Title: AJ Styles vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal is defending and has Truth Martini/Taeler Hendrix with him. Styles, who has a bad back coming in, is part of the Bullet Club but comes out alone. We get some big match intros and we're ready to go. Feeling out process to start as they seem to have a lot of time to work with. AJ gets the better of a technical sequence and Lethal bails out to the floor. Back in and AJ grabs a headlock as the announcers debate whether Elgin vs. Lethal will be for the title or not.

We get the drop down into the dropkick from Styles but Lethal hiptosses him down for a basement dropkick of his own. It's time for some big chops until Lethal gets caught in the Calf Cutter, sending him straight to the ropes. AJ has to avoid a book shot from Martini and gets dropped onto the apron, drawing a TRUTH MARTINI chant.

Lethal gets smart by sending him back first into the barricade and the pace slows down. We hit a camel clutch as the fans swear at someone over something. A suplex into the corner (also becoming too popular lately) rocks Styles' back for two more and Lethal grabs the world's least convincing bearhug. Shockingly enough, Jay Lethal holding a bearhug doesn't last long as AJ comes back with forearms and clotheslines, followed by a suplex into the corner of his own.

The springboard forearm is caught in the Lethal Combination for two and the champ takes over again. They fight over a suplex until AJ takes him over for a neckbreaker. I've always liked that move.

Styles can't get the Clash so Lethal throws him into the air and pulls him down into a neckbreaker for two of his own.

Lethal gets tired of this wrestling stuff and throws AJ over the barricade and into the crowd. Ever the genius, Lethal tries a suicide dive with AJ still behind the barricade. AJ, also not that bright, tries the forearm off the barricade but really just collides with Lethal instead. Naturally the fans think it's awesome because you could put an ROH label on Lord Littlebrook vs. Little Beaver and they would declare it wrestling.

Back in and Jay grabs a Koji Clutch, only to get countered into the Calf Cutter, sending Jay into the ropes again. A big Lethal Injection out of the corner gets two but AJ snaps off a Pele, followed by the Bloody Sunday. Styles loads up something else but gets thrown over the top and through a table, absolutely destroying it in the crash. AJ dives in at nineteen and the Lethal Injection gets two (of course). Instead, Lethal uses Jerry Lynn's cradle piledriver (due to Jerry saying AJ would win) to set up the second Lethal Injection to retain at 22:09.

Rating: B+. This wasn't a masterpiece or even a classic but it was a pay per view quality main event. Lethal pinning Styles clean was a good way to make Lethal look great as AJ has been considered one of the best in the world for a long time now. I'm not sure how long Jay holds the title but if they want to pull the trigger on something, giving it back to Elgin in Tokyo would be rather smart.

And now, WE GET MORE HONOR RISING. Yes seriously, we're getting another match from this show because four straight weeks wasn't enough.

Ring of Honor World Title: Tomoaki Honma vs. Jay Lethal

We're joined in progress with Honma headbutting Lethal in the back to break up the Lethal Injection. Jay is knocked to the floor for a top rope headbutt to put both guys down in a heap. Honma pulls him back inside but eats a superkick, only to turn Jay inside out with a clothesline for two.

An enziguri drops Honma but again he pops up and hits a middle rope headbutt. Honma misses his top rope headbutt though and Jay gets a breather. The referee gets bumped though, allowing Los Ingobernales to interfere. A Book of Truth to the head has no effect on Honma (he has a hard head you see) so Naito kicks him low, setting up the

Lethal Injection for the pin to retain at 15:32 (original match time).

Rating: C-. Honma has a hard head and that's all I know about him from this match. He seems to be a cult favorite so it makes sense to have him get the shot on a show like this but the ending seemed to be more about setting up Honma's next feud than anything else. Still though, the match was good enough, even if there was a lot of it clipped out.

Kelly says goodbye but says next week it's a special look at Bullet Club. For those of you keeping track, that would be the sixth straight week with no new content.

Overall Rating: C. This is a tough one to rate so we'll go right in the middle. Let's take a quick look at the good and bad things here. First of all, this was about Ring of Honor (save for the required look at Honor Rising, which I'm sure we'll hear even more about next week). It also helped that the wrestling was good, which always makes the show go by faster.

Now for the obvious bad: we haven't had a new show with just the Ring of Honor crew since March 16. Think about that for a minute. We've now gone over two months since we either got a full Ring of Honor card or anything original. They've even taped TV since then but no, wait, let's look at Jay Lethal and the Bullet Club before we actually get to that. I don't know if it's a syndication issue or whatever but it's beyond ridiculous at this point and needs to be fixed immediately, as in not after at least one more "special" episode.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

AAA Triplemania XXIII: The Mexican Barely Legal

Triplemania 23

Date: August 9, 2015

Location: Arena Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico

Attendance: 22,300

Commentators: Hugo Savinovich, Matt Striker

This is a show that was talked about quite a bit back in the day as it featured English commentary from Matt Striker (oh yay) and Hugh Savinovich (oh...yay) but was plagued by some horrible technical issues. I'm kind of curious to see how bad things get here but it's probably going to be even worse as I have almost no idea what's going on coming in. Let's get to it.

Before we get started, my usual disclaimer: my Spanish is conversational at best so there's a very good chance I'm going to get some history or backstories wrong. I apologize in advance and I'll be going mainly off what I'm told here and what information I can find online.

As is customary, we open with the widow of company founder Antonio Pena being introduced to the crowd.

The announcers are introduced.

Video on the history of Triplemania. In a bad sign of things to come, the video is airing on the screens and the camera is just pointed at them. The video has a Mission: Impossible theme, which is likely a tie-in to the latest movie. How did that licensing meeting go? "Hey movie studio: we want to tie your blockbuster in with a Mexican wrestling show!" I'm sure the producers were thrilled by the concept. The audio issues are already kicking in before the video ends.

An older man comes to the ring, flanked by a group of good looking women holding some flags. I believe this is another Antonio Pena tribute but apparently he's the ring announcer, at least for the

first match.

Dinastia/Drago/Goya Kong/Pimpinela Escarlata vs. Mamba/Daga/Sexy Star/Mini Psycho Clown

The audio cleans up a bit during the entrances but good night this could be a long show. Sexy Star is one half of the World Mixed Tag Team Champions, Goya is about Nia Jax's size, Dinastia and Clown are both minis and Escarlata is an exotico. After hearing what sounds like the production truck, we can barely hear Striker doing English commentary. He sounds like he's standing five feet away from the microphone and Hugo isn't much better.

The minis get things going with Dinastia (the Minis Champion) headscissoring Clown around with ease. Off to Mamba (who might be another exotico) vs. Drago as everything breaks down due to the lucha rules (going to the floor is the same as a tag). Dragon hits a BIG flip dive to take Daga down on the floor, leaving Mamba vs. Escarlata. Star comes in but gets armdragged down as this is all over the place. Goya armdrags down Star and Mamba before she and Escarlata load up double dives, only to stop to dance. There is no sense of order or story to this other than Goya getting quadruple teamed in the corner.

Daga launches Star onto Drago for two before it's back to the minis. When I say back to I mean they fight while almost everyone else is in the ring at the same time. Now it's Kong getting quadruple teamed again but she actually fights them all off (so she's the Roman Reigns of this match?) as her teammates come in to help her a bit. Goya gives Star a Stinkface as Striker talks about the show trending on Twitter. The much smaller Daga is run over by Goya as the match has actually settled down for a chance.

Drago kicks Mamba to the floor and hits a huge corkscrew dive, allowing the minis to fight even more. Star corkscrews onto Mamba and Drago with Escarlata following. The audio starts glitching again as Goya does a dance, followed by an apron flip dive. Back in and Escarlata kisses the referee before grabbing a freaky submission on Star (as in he ties up the legs and bends her over his back) for the win.

Rating: D+. These matches have always been lost in translation for me. I know they're supposed to be a fun mess to get the crowd going but I've rarely been a fan of this much insanity. Really all this

made me want to do was watch Lucha Underground, though it wasn't the worst thing in the world. This just isn't my thing and I don't think it ever will be.

Escarlata kisses Striker on the cheek after the match.

Referee Pepe Tropicadas gets a special presentation for what might be his retirement ceremony. It seems that he's going to be refereeing here, despite being in his early 70s. There's going to be a second referee in the ring though, which could either help or make things even more complicated.

Los Psycho Circus vs. Los Villanos

This is a battle of famous wrestling families with Los Villanos being VERY established veterans who you might remember from WCW. This is Villano III's (partner of IV and V here) last match, meaning we get a video package (again with the camera just pointed at the screen) on the family's history.

Los Villanos have titles with them but of course Striker and Hugo are too busy drooling over history to explain what's going on right in front of them. Or maybe they do explain it but the audio issues flare up again. The Circus has a full theme entrance which is a bit more energized than the Villanos (with a combined 160+ years between them). Before the match, Villano IV says he and V lost their masks but get to wrestle with them one more time, only to guarantee to take them off post match.

Psycho (of Psycho Clown, Murder Clown and Monster Clown) starts things off with I believe IV but everything breaks down into a chop fest with Tropicadas looking annoyed. The Clowns are all beaten up as this is in slow motion so far. Striker apologizes for the technical issues as all three Villanos go for Murder's mask. That only goes so far so they send him into the post instead before going back to the triple teaming. Just like in the first match, this is all over the place but going far more slowly. It doesn't help that the announcers seem to have no idea who is who for either team.

Los Villanos are in full control with their ancient looking offense, meaning it's time for another clown to start honking a horn. Now a buzzing comes over the audio feed as two Clowns dive on two Villanos. Hugo tries to explain something but the audio is almost completely drowned out by the buzzing. A triple splash crushes one of the Villanos (at least in WCW they had numbers on their attire)

and Psycho hits What's Up to make it even worse.

One of the Villanos mostly loses his mask as Striker is currently doing audio on his own. You can hear Hugo's voice at just above a whisper but it's impossible to make out. Striker seems to get annoyed at the fans for letting them know about the buzzing on Twitter. Striker: "Just pretend I'm calling a Killer Bees match." Psycho and Monster break up a double superplex with cookie sheets and turn it into a Tower of Doom, only to hurt Murder in the process.

Commentary is virtually non-existent at this point, with Striker saying that makes it feel more special. I know it's a stupid line but I can excuse it a bit in this case as he's basically helpless out there. Two Clowns are taken out by the slowest suicide dives you'll ever see, leaving I believe Psycho to hit Villano III with what looked like a yellow belt.

They salute each other (a sign of respect) and VERY slowly chop each other as we can hear Hugo for the first time in a good stretch. We get the "showdown" between Villano IV and Psycho, which apparently restarted this feud. The others are held back, leaving Villano IV to get in a low blow for the pin.

Rating: F. There's really no defending this one on almost any level. The commentary issues aside, this was WAY too slow and treated as something for the live audience instead of the fans at home. I get that this is the AAA show but you're presenting it to an American audience who doesn't know the history and the backstory here.

They were trying to explain things, but at the end of the day you had three guys at least 50 years old beating up a much younger team and looking every bit of their age. That's really not something I wanted to watch and it was made even worse by the buzzing. Really bad stuff here and a lot of that can't be blamed on the technical issues.

Villano III and Villano V take their masks off, which has to be done to satisfy some wrestling commission rule. Villano III looks older than Tropicadas. Members of the Villano family come to the ring and we get a retirement presentation to Villano III and Tropicadas because this hasn't dragged on long enough yet.

Here's Pena's widow again but this time she just waves to the crowd. Did I mention she's carrying her husband's urn?

The next match is announced as a cage match, which I believe is a surprise. It's for the Trios Tag Team Titles, but since this is AAA, you can leave the cage at any time and it's basically an Ultimate X match inside a cage. Only one belt has to be pulled down to win the match.

Trios Titles: Los Hell Brothers vs. Fenix/Los Gueros del Cielo vs. El Hijo de Fantasma/El Texano Jr./Pentagon Jr.

There's quite a bit to get through here. Los Hell Brothers (Chessman (Latin American Champion here)/Averno/Cibernético) are defending and are fighting against Konnan's La Sociedad stable (Represented by Pentagon Jr./Texano Jr./Hijo de Fantasma (King Cuerno and Cruiserweight Champion), who you probably know from Lucha Underground. If you don't stop reading this and go marathon the first season because it's AWESOME.) as well as against the evil bosses of AAA.

Fenix/Los Gueros (the White Boys From Heaven, comprised of Angelico and Jack Evans, both of whom appear with Fenix in Lucha Underground as well) are just good guys who want the titles. Got all that? It's a lot of backstory but my goodness it's nice to see a match where I know who almost everyone is.

The entrances take their sweet time but we're entertained by the sound testing stylings of Matt Striker. The whistle blows (yeah AAA doesn't use a bell) and we immediately go to a wide shot of the arena, meaning we can barely see anything. The buzzing is back as Striker does a pretty good job of telling us who everyone is. Of course it's still early in the match so it's still everyone going at it at once but I appreciate the effort.

Pentagon drops a top rope leg to low blow Evans and it's time for the cookie sheets. Angelico has a camera on him which could be cool if we actually went to the feed. Evans goes up for the title but is quickly pulled down into a cutter. Fenix gets quintuple stomped as Striker tells us to "use the Google" to learn about some of the names he's dropping. Evans is beaten up and of course does flips off the simplest bumps.

Angelico fights back with his running knees but Cibernético drops him with a clothesline. Things speed up a bit with Fenix getting backdropped, only to land on Texano with a hurricanrana. In a cool attempt, Evans flips up onto Angelico's shoulders but can't reach

the belts. Evans goes up again but opts to dive down onto Pentagon and I believe Averno. Fantasma and Chessman climb to the outside of the cage and Chessman is knocked onto a table at ringside.

Back inside, Cibernetico spears Texano through a table, leaving everyone else to climb the cage. Most of them fall outside and it's Fenix and Pentagon going at it inside. Fenix moonsaults off the top of the cage onto Pentagon for the insane spot of the match, which was only mostly insane. That leaves Averno and Fantasma to go after the belts but Angelico pulls himself up to fight Averno. Fantasma kicks Angelico in the face and knocks him down, only to get shoved off by Averno, leaving him to pull down the belt to retain.

Rating: C+. Match of the night by about a mile here but it's still nothing that hasn't been done better before. Some of the dives were good and you started to get a feel for it, but this really needed to be a six man match instead of having everyone in there. It felt like nine people who happened to be in the ring and I never got a sense that any of them had a personal issue with anyone else in the match. It's a fun match but too chaotic to really work.

Now the Spanish audio bleeds over the English before the English disappears all together.

It's been too long since we focused on an old guy so here's a match dedicated to Blue Demon's thirty years in wrestling.

Electroshock/El Mesias vs. La Parka II/Blue Demon Jr.

Mesias is Mil Muertes sans mask. He and Electroshock used to be big deals but time is passing them by. This means it's time to fight two old guys who are loyal to AAA because why use the old guys to put over young talent when you can put over Blue Demon's thirty year career and La Parka, who is even older?

Demon and Electroshock get things going with Demon using more old man style offense and looking like he should have retired years ago. The buzzing gets louder than it has all night and it's off to Mesias vs. La Parka. They're quickly on the floor and out into the crowd with Mesias getting the better of it. Mesias gets kicked outside again so it's off to Electroshock as we're lacking commentary again.

Back to Mesias for a right hand to the skeleton face but it's a quick double tag to Demon and Electroshock. Demon headscissors him down and ducks a charge to send Mesias outside for the third time.

It's off to Mesias vs. La Parka for a slugout with La Parka getting dropped off a few shots to the face.

Mesias is sent outside again (ok we get it already) and La Parka hits a weak dive, leaving us with Electroshock vs. Demon again. A powerbomb gets two on Demon, followed by Demon standing there so Electroshock can chop him a few times. Demon shrugs those off, hits something like a cross body, and grabs a Sharpshooter without turning Electroshock all the way over for the submission.

Rating: D. Blue Demon is another guy that I just don't get. He's old, he's slow, and he keeps getting pushed like this god for reasons that I can't understand. The rest of the match was just kind of there and again, there was no backstory given or a reason we should care other than "BLUE DEMON IS A LEGEND!!!" I only knew the story I mentioned earlier because I saw it elsewhere online. As has been the case with this whole show, it's all about the old guys and if you didn't see the shows that built this one, you're going to be mostly lost.

Demon gets a plaque. Electroshock shock comes back, flips off the fans, and then leaves again.

It's time for the Hall of Fame inductions, starting with Hector Garza. We get his family on stage, a video package, and a bunch of statements from various legends.

Second is Perro Aguayo Jr., who passed away earlier this year.

Brian Cage vs. Alberto El Patron

Patron's (Alberto Del Rio of course) Mega Championship isn't on the line because Cage has already used his title shots so instead it's hair vs. hair. Cage has Hijo de Fantasma in his corner while Alberto has Fenix. Patron comes out with a full mariachi band and a modified version of his WWE theme music. Cage one ups Alberto's robe with a Trump 2016 shirt.

Alberto starts fast with right hands in the corner and starts pounding away with a chair. Thanks for telling us that it's No DQ after he started swinging. Cage bails and gets taken down by a suicide dive so it's time to pose on the table. The armbreaker almost goes on but Cage powerbombs him down for an early break. Now it's the very muscular Cage with chair shots of his own before he wedges the chair in the corner. Really why would you do that? Have

you ever watched a wrestling match before?

They head outside where Fantasma is stomping on Fenix while Cage rams Patron into the table. Back in and we get a cookie sheet upside Alberto's head, followed by a nice slingshot splash for two. Cage really shouldn't be able to do something like that. Cue Fantasma to choke a bloody Del Rio on the ropes but Fenix comes in for a save off some kicks. Fenix dives onto Fantasma and Striker goes on a rant about how international that was.

Cage apparently doesn't care for it as he powerbombs Fenix against the post, sending the seconds up the ramp. Alberto grabs a quick armbreaker over the ropes for the exact same break it always gets, even though this is No DQ so there's no reason to break the hold. Cage takes forever jumping from the middle rope to the top rope for a moonsault (again, shouldn't be able to do that) and only hits the mat. A Backstabber gets two for Alberto but it's time for Fantasma to send in the tables with the referee helping to set them up.

Alberto breaks up a superplex and hits the double stomp but since this is Mexico, Cage doesn't have to sell it and sends Patron through a table instead. The low superkick gets a heel one count from the referee so Alberto gives him a backbreaker. Del Rio's top rope hurricanrana is countered with a low blow and a super bomb through another table for two off a fresh (well as fresh as someone that old can be) referee. With nothing else left, Cage pounds away at the head with a chair, only to be sent into the wedged chair (you knew that was coming). The armbreaker makes Cage tap.

Rating: B. Match of the night by a mile here and one of the most predictable endings due to the nationalism angle but still fun. Del Rio continues to be WAY more interesting as a face, which is why WWE makes sure to push him as a heel every single chance they can. I'm almost sure Cage is going to be back in WWE at some point and I'm really not sure why they let him go in the first place.

Post match Alberto has something to say but can't find a working mic. Apparently he swears in Spanish and Hugo won't translate it. Alberto grabs the Mexican flag and says this is his house. Until WWE calls again that is.

Cage gets his head shaved and goes after Alberto, only to get beaten down again and covered in the American flag. Dang it Alberto now we have to get it cleaned.

Actor Simon Pegg introduces Myzteziz (formerly Sin Cara), who comes out to the Mission: Impossible theme and repels from the ceiling like Tom Cruise did in the first movie.

Rey Mysterio vs. Myzteziz

Dream match main event. Rey comes out with black wings and looks like Hawkman. Myzteziz on the other hand is in half white and half black. We get a reluctant handshake and they take turns posing with Myzteziz getting annoyed at the lack of cheering. Striker and Hugo take shots at WWE because they think those mean anything these days. I mean, I know JBL and Cole aren't the best commentary team in the world but they're better than Striker and Hugo as you can actually hear them on big shows.

Rey sends him into the corner three times in a row to start and there goes Myzteziz's shirt. Myzteziz gets tired of this waiting and punches Rey in the face, only to get taken to the mat for a headlock. Back up and Rey is sent outside for his stomach first crash, followed by a powerbomb onto the table. I guess Mexican tables are tougher than American ones too.

They get back in and Rey snaps off a headscissors with the announcers going on about traditional lucha libre. A seated senton off the apron sets up a hurricanrana to send Myzteziz into the post. That means it's time for blood under the mask and Rey is in control. Naturally there's already a fresh table set up at ringside. Even ECW would say tone it down with those things already. Back in and Myzteziz grabs a quick suplex to send Rey through said table and both guys are down again.

Matt can't remember the Spanish word for blood as Myzteziz (dang I can't stand having to type that name over and over) buckle bombs Rey for two. Myzteziz tries it again so Rey hurricanranas him to the floor, setting up a big seated senton from the top. Back in and Rey gets two off a La Mistica rollup (nice touch), giving the announcers something to actually get excited about. Rey actually starts going after the mask but opts for two off a sunset flip instead.

Myzteziz flips him face first onto the mat instead, setting up a twisting Swanton for two. These slow counts may be traditional but they're getting annoying in a hurry. Rey's high cross body is countered into a spinning Side Effect for two more and both guys are down. The 619 is broken up (Hugo: "Wrong number!") so Myzteziz uses

it himself. A frog splash (minus the frog) gets two on Rey so he comes back with La Mistica, followed by the real 619 for two.

Back up and Rey uses La Mistica again for the submission. That was kind of weird but even more out there was Striker freaking out that the two main events both ended in submission. It's really not that big of a deal dude, though to be fair neither is Striker and he's never gotten that either.

Rating: B. This was a lot less messy and the match was much better as a result. It felt like a big deal and the idea here was much simpler but it's still only so good. Rey can still go with the right kind of opponent and Myzteziz didn't botch anything major. For these two at this point, this was just a step beneath a miracle and one of the best matches of the night.

Post match Rey goes to be with the fans but Los Perros Del Mal (Joe Lider/Pentagon Jr.) and Averno run in to go after Myzteziz's mask. Rey makes the save but gets a staple gun to the head for his efforts. Myzteziz gets up and fights them off with Rey's help. The heels are all gone...so Myzteziz shoves Rey down and sprays something in his eyes to go full heel. Oh sorry rudo. Myzteziz wants a mask vs. mask rematch, presumably at the next pay per view. The blind Rey gets powerbombed through the table.

Cue Rey's friend Konnan and his super heel stable La Sociedad...and the show goes off the air early as Konnan is giving Myzteziz a sales pitch. Myzteziz would turn it down after the show was over and would leave AAA in about two months, meaning no rematch.

Overall Rating: D+. The last two matches are good but they're nowhere near enough to save the show. Between the horrible technical issues and the old guys being almost universal disasters, there's really no way to validate this being seen as a good show for the American audiences. The bad things here are just too much for the limited good to overcome and there's little any company can do to get around that.

Above all else, this show reminded me of the biggest problem with ECW's first pay per view Barely Legal (which just missed going off the air early by about ten seconds). The problem with that show was ECW assuming you knew everything that was going on so they didn't bother recapping most of the stuff on the show. That becomes a big problem when you're presenting your first pay per view to an

American audience in a very long time. You can't assume that fans have watched TV leading up to the show because the more lost they are, the less likely they are to buy another show.

This show was putting in an effort, but it was WAY too focused on honoring legends. It's cool if you want to do that, but at the same time you risk the problem of fans getting really bored watching a lot of the lame action. That's the style that dominated most of the first half of the show and really made me want this to be over. The last two matches helped a lot and it's no coincidence that they were the matches with the most detailed backstories. This was a pretty strong misfire that could have been made much better with some strong adjustments, but it really doesn't work as is.

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Lucha Underground – August 5, 2015: Marvel-0us

Lucha Underground

Date: August 5, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Schiavello, Matt Striker

It all ends here. Well at least it all ends here until they make the announcement of season two. This is the final night of Ultima Lucha and it's a two hour episode, making the biggest show of the year a full on three hour special. The main event is Prince Puma defending

the Lucha Underground Title against Mil Muertes, as well as the fallout of Black Lotus and the Cuetos. Let's get to it.

This show is dedicated to Roddy Piper. That's appropriate as he was a huge deal in Los Angeles.

We hear a clip of Cueto's speech on the first show, leading to Konnan pitching Prince Puma to Cueto on the same episode. The rest of the video recaps the rest of tonight's matches. That image of Muertes in the casket and opening his eyes is just chilling. I'm really, really impressed by how well they've set this show up and I've been looking forward to it all week.

Johnny Mundo vs. Alberto El Patron

This is quite the way to open a show. Mundo starts running at the bell and they wind up in front of Cueto's window, which started this whole thing. A big kick to Johnny's head gets things going and Alberto whips him into Cueto's wall, followed by the announcers' table. Alberto starts after the arm but the referee pulls him away, allowing Johnny to hide under the ring and find some powder to blind Patron.

Johnny cuts out the shenanigans and kicks Alberto in the head like a villain should. They actually get inside for a Mundo chinlock, followed by a running knee to the face. Alberto fights up and hooks a reverse superplex before it's time for a slugout. Patron takes over and hooks a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker followed by the Backstabber, which is kind of an odd series of offense when his finisher is an armbar. I've always like Alberto's simple psychology but if he's going for the arm later, this doesn't make the most sense.

The low superkick misses and Johnny nails an enziguri for two. Mundo loads him onto the top for a big Backstabber of his own for two but Alberto clotheslines him to the floor. His suicide dive hits a knee to the head though, allowing Johnny to hit a flip dive over the top. Back in and Alberto grabs the armbar out of nowhere but Johnny is into the ropes almost immediately. With nothing else working, Alberto ties him in the Tree of Woe for some kicks but misses a baseball slide, sending him shoulder first into the post.

Patron gets tied up in the ropes, allowing Johnny to hit a top rope double stomp as Alberto tries to get up. The End of the World connects for two and Johnny is stunned. Alberto gets up and tries

the superkick but Johnny pulls the referee in the way, only to get caught in the armbreaker. There's no referee but it doesn't matter as Johnny escapes and stomps away. Alberto grabs another armbreaker over the top rope but cue the debuting Melina to hit Patron with the AAA Title belt, setting up another End of the World to give Mundo the pin.

Rating: B. Oh yeah this show is going to ROCK. This was awesome stuff and Melina running in is a smart move as she fits in perfectly with the show, especially at Mundo's heel side. You have to expect that at least one of these two is going to get into the title hunt next season, but I'd be down for a rematch. Finally, these two were brought in as the big names and they delivered in their big match. Well done.

Alberto is livid and throws Mundo into some chairs and then through a window. Melina goes after Alberto like the fire cat she is, earning her a spanking. Striker: "I'm going to rewind that on my DVR." Alberto holds up the title as Mundo is COVERED in blood.

El Dragon Azteca comes in to free Lotus but Dario is waiting on him. The punishment for Azteca entering the temple is death, but as Cueto is distracting him, Lotus reaches through the bars and chokes Azteca. Cueto watches and Lotus hits Azteca in the back, seemingly killing him. Cueto lets her go but she says she's done what she came here for. Now she needs his protection and they're going to "the new temple" but first they unlock Matanza's cage and let out the camera that's inside.

Pentagon Jr. vs. Vampiro

I'm hoping we find out the master, and I'll be surprised if it's anyone but Konnan. Vampiro comes to the ring in what looks like a zombie Pope outfit. Unfortunately it's not a zombie D'Angelo Dinero, which would be a much more interesting look. This is a Cero Miedo match, meaning No Fear. I have no idea what that means but I'd assume it means hardcore/street fight. It seems that I'm right as Pentagon hits him with a chair at the bell and they head outside for more chair shots.

Vampiro, still in the robes, is knocked into the crowd for more of a beating before they head back to ringside. The mats are pulled back for an AA onto the concrete as this has been entirely one sided so far. With Vampiro on the floor, Pentagon just unloads on him with

chair shots as Striker wants the match stopped. The referee throws up an X (he's Straight Edge Society?) and we take a rare break.

Back with Vampiro staggering back to the ring for one more swing. He takes Pentagon down with a spinwheel kick and it's time for a bag of tacks. Pentagon screams when he's slammed down onto the tacks but Vampiro is stupid enough to go up top for a flip dive WHEN HIS OPPONENT IS LAYING ON A PILE OF TACKS. He deserves all the holes in his back from the crash.

Pentagon busts out a light bulb tube to break over Vampiro's back before CARVING UP HIS NECK with the pieces. I'm more impressed by that than Pentagon licking the blood off his arm. Vampiro fights up again and slugs away before hiptossing Pentagon through another light tube in the corner.

After doing that, why not rip at the eye holes of Pentagon's mask? He smashes a third tube over Pentagon's head (where do they store those things and WHY ARE THEY IN A WRESTLING ARENA???) but Pentagon backdrops him onto the tacks. As usual, the old, banged up man is able to not only survive this but also gets up and belly to belly superplex Pentagon onto the tacks. It's table time and Vampiro finds a lighter for good measure. The table is lit on fire but, as is the rule in wrestling, if you set up a table you get thrown through it, meaning Vampiro is left rolling around on fire, allowing Pentagon to get an easy pin.

Rating: C+. This was your above average hardcore war with the ridiculous weapons and big spot to end things. Pentagon has somehow turned into a hardcore brawler after spending weeks building himself up as the arm breaker extraordinaire. Fun enough match though, especially given how banged up Vampiro is from all the years in the ring.

Post match Vampiro holds out his arm and demands that Pentagon break it. Pentagon does as he's told and says he's done what he promised his master. Here's the master and it's....Vampiro. Now THAT is awesome as they played up Vampiro and Ian Hodgkinson as two different people, making this about as well done as it could have been. I was thinking it might be Vampiro when he offered Pentagon his arm but I never thought they would actually go through with it. Well done indeed.

Gift of the Gods Title: Big Ryck vs. King Cuerno vs. Sexy Star vs.

Bengala vs. Fenix vs. Aerostar vs. Jack Evans

This is basically Money in the Bank but you have to announce a week in advance and the winner will have to defend it, which is a concept that Money in the Bank could REALLY benefit from. The match is without tags and one fall to a finish. It's a wild brawl to start (a recurring theme tonight) with Ryck throwing everyone outside until Aerostar tries his luck with a waistlock.

That earns him an ejection of his own before all six of them get inside and go after Ryck at the same time like a smart group of people would do. Back up and everyone is sent to the floor, leaving Aerostar to hit a big flip dive to take Fenix down, only to have Fenix powerslam him off the apron. Back in and Evans kicks Cuerno in the head to send him outside for a big dive, which only hits mat as Cuerno is smart enough to step aside. It's Ryck breaking up Bengala's pin on Star before Ryck just starts throwing people around with ease.

As Ryck beats up various luchadors like a cyclops would destroy villagers, Aerostar crawls up to the balcony to dive down onto three masked men, only to have Marty Martinez come in to get in a slap fight with Star. After easily dispatching Marty (because he's a freaking moth), Star dives onto the same pile of masked men, only to be stomped down by Cuerno inside. The Thrill of the Hunt puts Star down but Cuerno opts to roll her outside instead of covering.

It's Bengala coming back in though and cleaning house and monkey flipping Cuerno into Fenix in the corner. A big corkscrew dive takes Fenix down again, only to have Cuerno hit that awesome suicide dive of his to put Bengala down as well. Evans remembers he's in the match and puts Aerostar in a guillotine choke, only to get DDT'd down to break the hold. It's Star back in to beat up Aerostar over a copyright issue I'd assume but here's Daivari to destroy Ryck with a chair for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

Evans hits a springboard splash on Ryck for two but Cuerno makes the save and puts Evans in a surfboard. It's Fenix's turn for a save but he gets caught in something like AJ Lee's Black Widow from Evans. That's fine with Fenix as he flips him up and fires off a bunch of knees to Evans' head, followed by a fire driver (over the shoulder tombstone) to give Fenix the pin and the title.

Rating: C-. These really aren't my thing. They're just a bunch of

insane spots with people staying on the ground for long stretches of time until it's time for another spot. Fenix winning probably makes the most sense as Bengala hasn't been around, people would have issues buying Star as the winner (though it would have been interesting), Ryck is an enforcer and Evans is a spot monkey. Cuerno or Aerostar could have been options, but it was really Fenix's match to lose.

Blue Demon Jr. vs. Texano

Yeah and now there's this match because Blue Demon needs a payday or something. Demon has the Crew with him, which likely means this was going to be Chavo Guerrero until he got hurt, which at least would have been a better option. Before the match, Demon hands the announcer a card, saying Cueto has made this No DQ. Ok, enough of the brawls with no rules. We get it already, now go have a regular match. Texano goes right after him to start but has to go after Cisco and Castro.

It's back to the people actually in the match with Texano doing a cool little move in the corner where he'll chop with the right hand and swing through with a left handed clothesline on the follow through. A spinebuster and a powerbomb get two on Demon but the Crew comes in for the save. Cue Chavo with a chair to nail Texano, allowing Demon to get the pin with one foot on the chest, because why let a young guy get a big win when you can give it to a guy pushing 50?

Lucha Underground Title: Prince Puma vs. Mil Muertes

Puma is defending and sans Konnan tonight. There must be a winner, which I really, really hope doesn't mean anything goes. The bell rings and Muertes gets right in the middle of the ring to say bring it. Muertes pounds the champion down with ease when Puma is stupid enough to go right at the monster. They head into the crowd with Muertes continuing his destruction and throwing Puma down the steps. Striker: "This isn't a football stadium or a bingo hall!"

With nothing else working, Puma picks up Catrina and swings her at Mil, driving one of the high heels into Muertes' eye. That's fine with Mil, who whips Puma into the chairs. Puma finally sends Muertes into the barricade, allowing him to use the apron as a springboard to kick Mil in the mask. We get a table, because where would we be without a table, but Muertes rams Puma face first onto the wood.

Muertes powerbombs Puma onto the wooden stairs before finally tossing the champ back inside.

Puma gets a breather and tries a suicide dive, only to get knocked out of the sky with a chair shot. Muertes can't send him into a chair in the corner though and gets kicked, down, setting up a big double stomp to put both guys down. Puma tries some flips and gets punched in the face for his efforts. As usual, why over complicate anything? The champ sidesteps a charge to send Muertes into a chair, setting up a GTS (with a kick instead of a knee) for two.

Muertes just unloads in the corner with forearms to the face until Puma backflips into a kick to the head because he can. Puma is somehow able to roll through some northern lights suplexes (fans: "SUPLEX CITY!" Wouldn't that be ciudad de suplex?) Catrina is freaking out so she holds up the magic stone (that's so stupid but it works here), causing Muertes to rise to his feet and spear Puma through the ropes onto the corner of the table (freaking ow man!), followed by a powerbomb onto the wreckage.

Somehow that's only good for two so Muertes hits a wicked chokeslam. Appropriate since he's basically the Mexican Undertaker. Puma fights up again and kicks Muertes in the head, setting up the 630 for a very near fall. A second attempt misses though and an even bigger spear cuts Puma in half. The Flatliner gets two (I thought that was it) and even Muertes is stunned. Another kick to the head sets up another 630 (Striker: "How many times can you use the same weapon if it doesn't work?" Until it gets a pin you nitwit.) but Muertes gets up and runs the corner for a super Flatliner for the pin and the title.

Rating: A-. The ending was obvious as Puma has basically beaten everyone else in the main event and now we need a new hero. This was a great back and forth brawl with Puma fighting with everything he had but ultimately not being able to overcome the monstrous power that was Mil Muertes. It's really, really hard to get me interested in a match with an obvious ending but they pulled it off really well here.

One last note: notice how big it felt when Muertes kicked out of the 630 and when Puma kicked out of the Flatliner. Those felt like important moments because they're not something we ever see. In other words, it's not like the AA where you see it get two on any

given episode of Raw and are then asked to believe in the near falls. Look what happens when you can use this stuff in a big match, as it worked like a charm here.

Catrina gives Puma the lick. Well at least he gets something. Catrina, Muertes and the Disciples of Death pose in the ring as the credits roll.

Since this is Lucha Underground though, the cool stuff is after the credits. Black Lotus and Cueto are packing as much money into a bag as they can before running off. They get into a car hauling a trailer, which has a small hole cut open. We actually see Matanza's mask looking out and growling in a nice touch.

Fenix gets in his car and drives away.

Marty Martinez is in a dark room where he has Sexy Star tied up. She won't this is so funny when she meets his sister. Martinez laughs maniacally and rocks back and forth in a creepy shot.

Angelico tells Son of Havoc and Ivelisse that they're getting those titles back before riding off on a motorcycle. Havoc asks Ivelisse if she wants one more ride but she tells him to shut up and get on.

Drago and Aerostar meet but Drago turns into fire and I guess flies away.

Pentagon asks Vampiro where they're going now.

Dragon Azteca puts his mask back on and looks at a Lucha Underground sign with a question mark over it.

Cueto stares into the camera as lights go off behind him. To Be Continued.

Overall Rating: A-. Well that was amazing. This is a rare occurrence where I'm sitting here watching and wanting to see more because I care about these characters and want to know where they're going from here. That's a feeling I haven't had about WWE or any other wrestling company (well other than NXT) in a long, long time.

The wrestling wasn't great here, but this wasn't about what happened in the ring. This was about advancing the drama, wrapping up the stories and setting up more stories going forward, all of which they did in spades. The key thing here is that I WANT to see more, not that I'll see more because it's on next week. Outstanding stuff here and well worth checking out, either on its own or with the previous

week as a bonus.

Now why does this show (the series as a whole) work so well? I could go into a long list of why, but above all else, I'll go with because they had a vision of what they wanted to go with and ran with it. This show established itself from the start and never gave up on that idea. It never became WWE-lite like TNA or got silly like so many WWE shows became. This felt like something genuinely different and that made it feel special. I'd love to see another season of this and hopefully they can get the funds together for another one. Great stuff here and check this show out, from the beginning if you can.

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Lucha Underground – July 8, 2015: Atomicos, Fire and Death

Lucha Underground

Date: July 8, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

We're less than a month away from Ultima Lucha and that means most of the card has already been set up. The main questions remaining are who will get the last of the medallions and what does it mean

for the people who win them. My guess is a midcard title of some sort but it's hard to guess around this place. Let's get to it.

The opening recap focuses on some of the big matches coming up at Ultima Lucha with Mundo vs. Alberto getting more time than anything else. Nothing really gets a ton of time though.

Pentagon Jr. bows to his master (and we see a shadow this time) and says Ian Hodgkinson (Vampiro's real name) won't face him at Ultima Lucha. He will be sacrificed though. Konnan is going to be the master isn't he?

Cage vs. The Mack

I believe this is fallout from Cage taking Mack's spot in the Trios Title match a few weeks back. They trade kicks to the head to start until Cage throws him down and plants him with a delayed vertical suplex. Mack shrugs them off and hits an exploder suplex into the corner (think Sami, but bigger, stronger and without as much charisma) for no cover. A discus lariat puts Mack down again but he kicks Cage in the head and slides between Cage's legs into a rollup for the big upset.

Rating: C+. What the heck was that? The Mack really hasn't shown me much in Lucha Underground so far but this was quite the power brawl with two big guys beating the tar out of each other for about four minutes before a quick rollup pin. How Cage didn't thrive as a monster in NXT is beyond me because he's great in the role here.

Catrina comes up to Son of Havoc in the back and says death is coming. Ivelisse comes after her but Katrina disappears, leaving Ivelisse on top of Havoc. Angelico: "Don't tell me you two are getting back together again."

Prince Puma vs. Mil Muertes and Johnny Mundo vs. Alberto El Patron are set for Ultima Lucha.

Vampiro's sitdown interview is with Pentagon Jr. and Vampiro gets right to the point: he isn't fighting at Ultima Lucha. Now we get to the important stuff: who is the master? Pentagon says nothing so Vampiro brings up the hurting people. Pentagon says Vampiro used to be a monster like him but is now a coward, which is all Vampiro needs to make him snap. The masked man rants a lot about how Vampiro is a coward and walks out.

Mil Muertes vs. Son of Havoc

Muertes is in the ring to start the match, which you should NEVER do for a monster. Mil charges into a kick to the face, followed by a back elbow for two. They're quickly on the floor with Muertes throwing Havoc into a pile of chairs and slamming him onto the announcers' table. Havoc fights back inside and hits a quick double stomp into a standing moonsault for two. Vampiro: "You're going to need more than that to stamp out death."

Back up and Havoc flips out of a chokeslam, only to have Muertes punch him in the face to take over again. Havoc shoves him off the top but misses the Shooting Star, leading to the Disciples of Death appearing to wipe out Angelico. A rock to Ivelisse's face puts her down, only to have Havoc dive on everyone. It takes too much time though and Havoc eats a spear and the Downward Spiral for the pin.

Rating: C. Again not bad with Muertes looking like a monster but Havoc not getting squashed as a champion. They did a very solid job of keeping both guys looking strong while making Muertes the better man, which is a lot better than WWE does half the time these days. Good stuff.

Here's Texano to say he may not have always been a good guy but he's always been Mexicano. Yeah he's a cheater but he'd never turn on his people or his race. Chavo Guerrero and Blue Demon Jr. may be saying they're Mexico, but Texano is through and through. Texano wants Chavo out here right now but they get the Crew instead, which draws out Blue Demon to chase them off with just a stare. The Crew throws Demon a chair though and he knocks Texano silly to bust him open. Blue Demon says he's Mexico and doesn't need Texano to fight his battles. They'll fight at Ultima Lucha.

Team Alberto vs. Team Johnny

Alberto El Patron, Sexy Star, Drago, Aerostar

Johnny Mundo, Jack Evans, Super Fly, Hernandez

This is an Atomicos match, which apparently means one fall to a finish. Thanks for that rule change. Alberto and Johnny start things off but Mundo immediately tags out to Evans like a good heel. The good guys take over and stomp away on Evans in the corner with Star stomping Jack from the top rope. It's off to Fly who eats a quick headscissors, allowing for the tag off to Drago.

Hernandez comes in as well but everything breaks down with the rudos

destroying Alberto on the floor. This is insanely fast paced stuff and I can barely keep up with it. Star does a HUGE backwards dive to take out Evans and Fly, setting up the big parade of dives. Johnny breaks up Alberto's dive and gets chased up the steps though, thankfully leaving us with just six guys. Fly works over Star until it's off to Hernandez for a sitout Alpha Bomb for two. Mundo's running knee to the face gets the same and Evans breaks up a sunset flip with a knee to the back.

Things have finally settled down a bit here and I can suddenly breathe again. Star comes in off a tag and we get some heel miscommunication, only to have Hernandez pull Star off Fly as everything breaks down again. Alberto and Mundo are back with El Patron slapping Jack into the armbreaker but Mundo makes the save with the End of the World. Star goes up but dives into a rollup (with a handful of trunks) for the pin.

Rating: B. Fun tag match here and exactly the way they should have set up something for Ultima Lucha. The show is starting to feel huge and Alberto vs. Mundo is probably going to be the second biggest match on the card. Really fun main event here that felt like the lucha libre showcase they've been shooting for.

The announcers preview next week when Pentagon Jr. kicks Vampiro in the head and beats him with a chair. He vows to destroy this shell of a man and pulls out a can of gasoline. After dousing Vampiro, he promises to destroy him at Ultima Lucha. Pentagon pulls out a lighter and tells Vampiro he has one week to make a decision.

Overall Rating: B+. This was the return to form that Lucha Underground has been looking for. All of the matches delivered and it felt like a show that made me want to see the big show later on. When this show is on, there's very little like it and this worked wonders all around. Really good stuff here and a fun show.

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Lucha Underground – July 1, 2015: Who Is Mexico?

Lucha Underground

Date: July 1, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

The big story coming out of last week was Mil Muertes becoming #1 contender, meaning I'd advise you to send Prince Puma our final goodbyes before his inevitable destruction. Other than that we have the Disciples of Death coming after the Trios Titles, which should be another academic ending. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Chavo attacking Black Lotus and trying to feed her to Cueto's brother. Next up is Daivari vs. Texano which really isn't doing anything for me. Finally we have Drago losing the #1 contendership to Mil Muertes, because Muertes is evil and therefore unstoppable.

Chavo comes in to Cueto's office and gets a No DQ title shot in exchange for delivering Black Lotus. As a bonus, Cueto says if Konnan gets involved then the title changes hands.

Delavar Daivari vs. Texano

Daivari has Big Ryck. Texano slugs him away to start and a backdrop sends Daivari bailing to the floor. A slingshot hilo gets two but a Ryck distraction lets Daivari go after the knee. This feud hasn't been great so far (I still don't really know why they're fighting) and this match isn't likely to help things out. Daivari stays on the knee and Vampiro calls Texano a hero. Wait when did Texano turn face?

Daivari puts on a figure four but Texano quickly makes the ropes and chops away. A leg lariat gets two as this match isn't exactly

thrilling so far. Texano makes things serious by shouting in Spanish but Daivari is all like NO COMPRENDE and gets two off an X Factor. Ryck gets superkicked off the apron and a Batista Bomb ends Daivari.

Rating: D+. Texano is a good choice for a face (assuming he gets rid of the bullrope) but Daivari as a generic rich dude wasn't doing anything for anyone. The match wasn't any good and it showed how weak Daivari really is out there. Thankfully the fans are into Texano and a feud with someone else could do good things for him.

Konnan and Puma are getting ready when Catrina and Muertes come in to say the title is his. Then they disappear, which Konnan calls mind games.

After a break, Konnan tells someone we can't see that it's time to settle a debt by dealing with Chavo tonight.

Hernandez vs. Drago

Striker: "Hernandez is arguably one of the biggest luchadors on the roster." Actually it's not arguable Striker. Hernandez shoves him down to start but Drago flips back up to his feet. For some reason this stuns Hernandez because someone actually got back to their feet. We hit the chinlock as we hear about Drago being a karate champion. Back up and Drago's cross body completely fails as Hernandez casually counters it into something like a Big Ending.

A kick to the head staggers Hernandez on the top and sets up a hurricanrana for two. Not a bad power vs. speed match so far. Another kick to the face (well the heel but you get the idea) sets up an Asai corkscrew dive, only to have Hernandez Border Toss Drago onto the apron. A "fan" loses his belt and Drago gets whipped and choked for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but Hernandez is little more than power moves at this point. He never has been the most polished guy in the world but it's getting even worse in recent years. Drago is still good but he didn't get to do much here, making him feel far more average than anything else.

Hernandez tells the stupid fans that dragons aren't real and Drago is just a man.

Catrina tells Chavo that he'll die if he wins tonight. Chavo says he'll see Catrina and Muertes at Ultima Lucha.

Marty Martinez vs. Alberto El Patron

Alberto punches him down in the corner and kicks at the ribs, setting up a Codebreaker on the arm and the cross armbreaker for the win in less than a minute.

Post match Alberto tells Johnny Mundo that he has opened a new side of Alberto. He'll rip Johnny's face off at Ultima Lucha.

Lucha Underground Title: Chavo Guerrero vs. Prince Puma

Puma is defending, No DQ and if Konnan interferes then Puma loses the title. Chavo has the remaining Crew in his corner to protect him from Mexico, whatever or whoever that may be. Owen's Hart's spinout counters Puma's wristlock but he crucifixes Chavo for two. The champ flips over Chavo and Guerrero's knee gives out, drawing in the Crew to beat Puma down. Puma tries to fight both guys off as Chavo has barely moved. A DDT/top rope double stomp plants Puma again but Texano comes in to fight off the Crew. Puma goes up and hits a 630 on Chavo to retain the title.

Rating: C-. I have to believe that was a real injury (or at least a storyline "real" injury) because there's no reason to have the match go that way if Chavo was healthy. Even from Chavo's perspective it doesn't make sense because why wouldn't he help in a beatdown in a No DQ match? I'll give them a big break here because it seems like a real injury and it's not fair to criticize them in that case.

Texano says Mexico isn't coming for Chavo because it's right here.

Chavo is in the back when Blue Demon Jr. comes in. Demon chuckles at what he saw but Chavo says that Texano must be Mexico now while Demon is just some has been who lives in Miami. Demon slams him into a locker and leaves as Chavo smiles. I've asked this before and I'll ask it again: why am I supposed to care about Blue Demon Jr.? He's been around since the first episode, wrestled two or three times, and is apparently really important (yes I know his lineage), but I have no reason to care about him.

Overall Rating: D+. I didn't care about this one very much, but Ultima Lucha is really starting to take shape. They've got about a month to go before the major show and it should be interesting to see how good of a show they can put on when they have the time and the stories built up. Not a great show here, but it accomplished a few of its goals.

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Lucha Underground – June 17, 2015: Yo That's Different

Lucha Underground

Date: June 17, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Matt Striker, Vampiro

This is a special show as the entire episode is one match. Tonight Prince Puma is defending the title against Johnny Mundo in an all night long Iron Man match as ordered by Dario Cueto as we come closer and closer to Ultima Lucha. The last time there was a one match card things went very well so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Mundo's heel turn, which earned him a spot in tonight's title match.

Lucha Underground Title: Prince Puma vs. Johnny Mundo

Prince Puma is defending and this is an Iron Man match with TV time remaining. However, it's only pins or submissions. Both guys are in the ring to save time which is always appreciated. No Konnan here either, at least to start. Striker does a good job of running down their history as they circle each other to start. You don't want to

burn yourselves out in something like this.

Mundo takes the champ to the mat to start but Puma gets to the apron for a breather. That's not something you often see from a face. Back in and they lock up again with Johnny grabbing a headlock but getting rolled up for a few near falls. They start the flipping and Puma backflips into a headscissors, only to get kicked in the head to put him on the floor. Mundo misses a dive and lands on his feet, allowing Puma to slide back in and hit a big corkscrew dive of his own.

We take a break (I believe the third time ever during a match) and come back with a clock saying 33:45 remaining. That's a nice touch as I can't stand it when a match going until the end of the show suddenly ends with five minutes left. Puma grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the first fall and Johnny is looking frustrated. A neckbreaker gets some near falls for Johnny and it's off to an armbar.

Puma comes back with a shot to the head and a standing moonsault for two as they're still not going full speed. The champ gets dropkicked out of the air for two and it's back to the arm. The fans chant JOHNNY ZERO, which isn't quite on the NXT crowds' level but it's a nice try. A quick cutter stops Johnny cold, though he's still able to avoid a high cross body.

The End of the World is broken up but Puma lays back on him for a quick pin to tie things up, of course with a grab of the ropes like a villain should be using. Back from another break with Mundo chilling on the floor 28:20 to go. Vampiro: "I am so happy that he cheated." Back in and Mundo hits a big knee to the face for two but his superplex attempt turns into a slugout on the top rope.

That's fine with Puma who jumps from one side of the apron to the other for a hurricanrana down to the floor. It's time to pull out a tool box (meaning we get a Hornswoggle reference from Striker) and Puma is the first to get violent with a Mickinoku Driver through the crate. That's fine with Mundo who comes up with a crowbar to the head (remember No DQ) for a pin to make it 2-1. A quick Moonlight

Drive makes it 3-1 and the Flying Chuck followed by the End of the World makes it 4-1 in Mundo's favor. Now we're getting somewhere.

Mundo stops for a water as Puma can barely move. Puma pulls himself into the corner and rolls into a DDT but can't cover. Johnny is smart enough to put his foot on the ropes just in case in a very nice show of intelligence. Back up again and Johnny hits a neckbreaker onto the apron to knock Puma silly again as we go to a third break.

We come back and Mundo blasts Puma in the face with a big metal ladder. Mundo puts the ladder next to the balcony and takes his sweet time setting up two tables. With Johnny on the balcony, Puma pulls himself off the tables and slugs Mundo into the crowd before jumping down to set up a third table on top of the other two.

Vampiro is starting to have fun here, despite over twenty minutes of good stuff so far. We make it four tables as I'm guessing we're at about fifteen minutes to go in the show (put the clock up more often people).

Mundo blocks a superplex through the tables and superkicks Puma off the balcony for a crash which isn't treated as that big of a deal. Then again he got hit in the head with a crowbar earlier in the night and isn't dead so you have to give it some slack. Johnny climbs up to the bandstand and cuts a promo about the score about the moment, demanding that we get a song. The band plays and we're at 13 minutes to go.

Ever the cocky heel, Johnny turns his back, allowing Puma to climb the ladder. Johnny's swing of a 2x4 is blocked and Puma gets to the bandstand. A BIG guitar shot knocks Johnny silly and they go crashing through the four tables as we go to a break, thankfully skipping over the three minutes of laying around on broken wood.

Back again with 11:20 to go, meaning we're not missing much if anything between the breaks. Puma drags Mundo back to the ring and gets the easy pin to make it 4-2. Striker: "Prince Puma has cut the lead in half." No Matt, he hasn't. They slug it out until Mundo misses a spinning forearm, allowing Puma to nail an enziguri and a

tombstone to make it 4-3.

Now we get some extra psychology as Johnny bails to the floor and runs into the crowd to kill some clock. Mundo has some blood on his nose as the chase goes over to the announcers' desk. Puma finally catches up with him for a kick to the head but he misses the Phoenix Splash. Mundo runs to the entrance but here's Alberto to blast him in the back of the head and kick Johnny down the steps. Alberto is all ticked off and looks like a killer for one of the only times in his career. I'm digging what I'm seeing there, but then again I've always thought he was better as a face. Johnny is thrown back in and a 450 ties things up.

With 4:00 to go, Alberto throws out a challenge to Mundo, whether it's for the title or not. He'll take a title shot at Puma too, but of course you already knew that. It's tied up with about 3:00 to go as Johnny drives him into the corner and hammers away but has to elbow out of a fireman's carry. A quick C4 gives Mundo two with under 2:00 to go. Mundo misses a top rope hurricanrana as Puma slides away, leaving Mundo to just crash onto the ropes and then the mat. Puma kicks him into the corner and nails the 630 for the 5-4 lead to retain as time expires.

Rating: A-. Well that worked. It dragged a little bit in the middle and the comebacks were a bit of a stretch (crowbar to the head!) but the key here was the logical flow. This felt like one long match instead of a bunch of different acts thrown together. That makes a long match so much easier to watch and the lack of any extended resting (which would have been understandable) helped a lot too. I had a good time here and while it was a bit of a stretch to have Puma pin Mundo four times in about twelve minutes, at least it made sense in context. Really good stuff.

Overall Rating: A. This is a great example of what Lucha Underground does so well. This show was completely out of the ordinary for normal wrestling promotions and that makes Lucha Underground feel like an actual alternative. You hear that term thrown around for TNA and ROH all the time, but there really isn't much different between

those shows and WWE. Dedicating an entire hour to one match IS different and makes me want to come back instead of just say “yeah that was different but I’ve seen better.” I’m not saying this is better than WWE or anything, but they’re excelling at what they do and that’s a very good sign.

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Lucha Underground – May 13, 2015: Fun Wrestling

Lucha Underground

Date: May 13, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Matt Striker, Vampiro

Another week, another awesome show from Lucha Underground. The big story here is Alberto vs. Hernandez with the winner getting an eventually title shot at Prince Puma. There’s also the impending return of Mil Muertes, who is probably going to want to kill a few dozen people to make himself feel better. In other words, this show should be great. Let’s get to it.

We open with a recap of Patron beating Mundo last week for the right to face Hernandez tonight for the #1 contendership.

Cueto talks to his unseen brother about spending a fortune to find some medallions that will make a warrior stronger than a god.

Tonight, the battles for the medallions begin.

The announcers mention a new superstar debuting tonight.

Aerostar vs. Jack Evans

Here's the debut and someone I'm really not a fan of. Evans is one of the cockiest wrestlers of all time and the king of the unnecessary flips. The fans are behind Aerostar as he dropkicks Evan in the back to start. He puts Evans on the middle rope for his completely unnecessary (common word in this match) run across the ropes into a hurricanrana. Evans backflips from the middle rope to the apron but gets knocked to the floor for a flip dive from Aerostar, who comes up holding his knee.

Back in and Evans flips some more before kicking Star in the neck. Off to an STF of all things, which is surprising as you almost never see a submission in this company outside of Pentagon Jr. A standing corkscrew moonsault (Striker: "Ode to Blitzkrieg!" Makes sense as Blitzkrieg gave Evans the gimmick) gets two for Evans and he drops Star on his head with a German suplex.

A big hiptoss sends Evans to the floor and Star throws him into the barricade for good measure. Jack pops back up for a 450 off the same barricade to pop the crowd. Back in and Evans misses another springboard splash but catches Star on top. Evans: "EL MEJOR LUCHADOR!" (the best luchador). Star will have none of this and channels his inner Canadian with a super Canadian Destroyer for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was fun but I can never ignore all the flips for the sake of flips. Evans is a really solid heel but it was the right call to have him lose here. They're getting somewhere with Aerostar and that's a very important key to a company like this. Good little match here, but the flips made my eyes roll. The knee was forgotten as soon as it was introduced too.

The Mack is impressed by all the money Big Ryck has but Ryck is annoyed at their failure to win the Trios Titles. Ryck says this business is all about making money and for the right price, he'll beat up anyone.

Fenix vs. Sexy Star vs. The Mack vs. Killshot vs. Cage vs. King Cuerno vs. Pentagon Jr.

I'm assuming this is one fall to a finish. Cueto says the winner of

this gets one of the seven Aztec medallions. It's a huge brawl to start until Fenix and Pentagon are the only to standing. Fenix takes over by bouncing to the top for a missile dropkick as everyone else fights on the floor. Pentagon comes back with a running tornado DDT before the two of them go outside as well.

Cuerno and Killshot head inside to replace them with Killshot taking him to the mat. That lasts as long as you would expect until Killshot dropkicks him down, only to eat a hard kick to the head of his own. Star comes in with a shot from behind on Cuerno and is quickly replaced by Killshot, who gets his head taken off by Cage. The Mack comes back in and kicks Cage to the floor, only to have him run right back in to help Cuerno with a double suplex on Mack and Killshot.

Almost everyone gets back in but Star's shots have no effect on Cage. Instead it's Fenix kicking Cage down until Mack takes Cage out to the floor. Pentagon gets back in for a few seconds before it's he and Fenix hitting top rope double stomps on Killshot and Mack before clotheslining each other to give Cage and Cuerno two each with Cage and Star making the saves. Got all that? Cuerno kicks Cage instead of Star, who then dives onto Pentagon on the floor.

Cage slams Mack down but gets nailed by Killshot. Star grabs a rollup on Fenix but Killshot blasts the girl to put everyone down. Mack gets two on Cage off a standing moonsault (that looked cool) before it's back to Fenix diving over the top to take Pentagon down again. Cage catches Fenix's suicide dive in a suplex but Killshot dives onto both of them to put everyone not named Cuerno down.

Cuerno's Arrow nails Killshot as Pentagon and Star get back in. Fenix runs in to save Star but Pentagon manages a modified Widow's Peak to Star and a package piledriver on Fenix AT THE SAME TIME. That looked awesome but Star stops him from breaking Fenix's arm. Fenix pops back up with a quick hurricanrana and most of a standing moonsault for the pin on Pentagon.

Rating: B. Fun match but that's the highest a match like this can go. It wasn't much from a quality standpoint but that's the fun part about Lucha Underground: they don't try to be anything more than a very fun show without the quality being all that strong. Fun stuff here and Fenix continues to look like something awesome out there. Cueto says that the Crew is getting a shot at the Trios Titles for

winning a regular tag match last week. Son of Havoc says that's not fair as Ivelisse has a broken leg but Cueto makes it a ladder match for fun.

Katrina (looking GOOD here) comes in to Fenix's locker room and says Muertes is even stronger than ever. He's coming for Fenix, and that makes Fenix a pawn of death. Katrina leaves and Fenix sees men in skull masks staring at him.

Hernandez vs. Alberto El Patron

#1 contenders match and you have to win by pinfall or submission, basically making this a street fight. Feeling out process to start with Patron accepting a test of strength for no logical reason. Hernandez drives him into the corner and knocks him out to the floor for some rams into the apron. They get inside again and Patron gets two off a quick Backstabber but Hernandez runs him over to block the low superkick.

Something like a DDT and the low superkick are good for two on Hernandez but here's Johnny Mundo to pull Alberto to the floor for a DDT before throwing him through a window and right into Cueto's office. The smile on Cueto's face is another great example of why he's awesome. Fans: "WHY JOHNNY WHY???" Hernandez pins the bloody Patron with ease.

Rating: C-. This didn't have time to get anywhere and it was all about the angle anyway. Mundo has the potential to be a really strong heel as there hasn't been a big bad (wrestler at least) in Lucha Underground for a while now. Hernandez vs. Puma should be fun, as should Patron coming back to get revenge on Mundo.

Mundo says this is his world as Patron is taken out on a stretcher.

Overall Rating: B+. As usual, Lucha Underground is some of the most fun wrestling you'll see anywhere right now. They know exactly what they're going for here and that's one of the most important things you can have in a wrestling company. Really fun episode this week and they're going to be ready to knock it out of the park soon with their big shows.

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