

Middle Kingdom Wrestling – January 20, 2017: Lost in Translation

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: January 20, 2017

Location: Pattaya Boxing Stadium, Pattaya, Chon Buri, Thailand

Commentator: Al Leung

If I remember right, the previous season ended with a line about things picking up in the spring so I'm not entirely sure what this is. This one is labeled as a Thailand Edition though so maybe this isn't the third season premiere but rather just something as a bonus. Either way, they need all the ring time they can get so maybe we'll have something here. Let's get to it.

The opening video is in a club with some good looking women dancing. I've heard worse ideas.

We go to the arena for the first match and.....there's no one there. Of a few hundred seats, there might be two dozen people in the arena. I know there probably isn't much of a wrestling scene in Thailand but this is really sad looking.

Selfie King vs. Candy Brother vs. Mickie Rawaz

The winner gets a future MKW Title shot and the ring is HUGE, probably bigger than a WWE ring. No one gets an entrance and right away we get to a major downgrade in the production. There's a new (and far weaker) commentator who doesn't give his name to start the match.

On top of that the camera work seems to have gone way down in quality, though having a camera at either side of the ring is certainly different. A sloppy looking Russian legsweep/DDT combo puts everyone down and we get the triple headlock spot. King is sent outside and Candy....I guess dances as we're told Mickie is a local wrestler. That's the first thing we've heard about any of the wrestlers and we're over three minutes in.

This time it's Mickie being sent outside so Brother wraps a Twizzler around his hand...before kicking King in the ribs. Eh cute fake out.

We continue the "theme" of the match with Brother being sent outside so King can hit a Cannonball. Candy comes back in as there are too many cameramen on the apron. They're getting a bit distracting, much like having another camera in the corner for a lot of their shots.

Mickie slams both of them down and drops a double leg for two on both. Back up and Brother ties his legs between both of theirs' and pulls back on their arms for a good looking hold which goes nowhere. Instead it's off to some slaps to King's chest, followed by the Tower of Doom to put everyone down. The announcer (still no name) explains that this is a kickboxing ring, meaning it's much bigger and stiffer. That's one of the first interesting things he's said so far. King takes a few quick pictures and drops a frog splash on Brother for the pin at 10:31.

Rating: D-. And that might be too high. This was a real mess with absolutely no story, mostly bad wrestling and no help from the commentary. King winning is fine as he's one of the better known names in the promotion but that might be the only positive thing I can come up with here. It felt like they were trying but the major production downgrade and lack of anything resembling a story to the match dragged it through the floor.

King takes a quick selfie next to the fallen Candy in one of the best gimmicks going in the promotion.

Dalton Bragg is on the phone in the back (with subtitles, which help overcome some sound issues) and says he's not medically cleared to defend the MKW Title against the Slam.

ABC Tag Team Titles: Ash Silva/Jason Wang vs. Claude Roca/Tony Trivaldo

Roca (in his 70s) and Trivaldo are defending their French Tag Team Titles. Everyone (who I can identify thanks to some better graphic placement) seems to be a face here and it's Claude vs. Ash to start. A monkey flip sends Ash flying and Claude headlocks him over for good measure.

Trivaldo (easily the biggest guy and with by far the best look) comes in for a slam and headlock but it's off to Wang as this is already more structured than the first match. Wang takes over with some knees to the head and a frog splash connects (albeit being left a bit short) for two. We get some challengers miscommunication and it's a double clothesline to set up the tag to Roca. Claude

continues to use basic wrestling (I need a Drew Gulak joke there) until Jason throws him into the corner.

The challengers take over and turn into the de facto heels with Wang grabbing a camel clutch. Claude nips up (because of course he can) and monkey flips both of them down at the same time. There's the hot tag to Tony so house can be cleaned and everything breaks down. Tony spears Jason and gives Ash a release F5. Claude is thrown onto Jason for the pin at 11:20.

Rating: C+. This felt like a different promotion and that's the best thing that could happen. It's amazing what a simple story (work over the older guy and keep the younger, stronger champion on the apron) can do for a match and these guys worked fine together. Ash and Jason are old rivals (thank you commentator) so they had their own little story built in. Good match here and I had more fun with it than I was expecting to.

Ash and Jason get in a fight post match.

Overall Rating: D+. That tag match did wonders for this show and really does feel like it came from a different company. The opening match felt like something thrown together by people who had no idea what they were doing. Then everything improved in the second match, including the commentator (whose name was listed on the YouTube page but never on the show itself).

Overall, this was a downgrade from the China shows and some of that might be due to the length. This would have been better off at about five minutes shorter and just one match with more promos to fill in the extra time. It's far from terrible but as usual, there are a lot of adjustments to be made.

I know I keep harping on it but the commentary here was a big issue. I can't believe I'm saying this but I miss the old commentary team (maybe they're gone due to different location), who were far better than the lone guy here. Commentary can do a lot for a show, especially one like this where there isn't a deep history. Something as simple as "Ash and Jason have feuded before) was a big help but it was one of the only things we were given all night. The commentary is our guide and without it going well, it's hard to know where things are supposed to go.

Maybe this show didn't work as well because it was part of a co-promotion and more of a feature than a regular show but it wasn't as

good as the normal stuff is. There was something good in there though and the teaser for next time gave me some hope so maybe there's hope to be had. Not terrible but again the big problems really hold things back.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – June 29, 2016: Now I Understand The Opening

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: June 29, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Cam Ferguson, Eddie Strong

This is a big show as it's finally time to see the six man tag that has been in the opening video all season long. They've treated this as a major match with a story behind it and all that jazz so maybe it's going to feel like a bigger deal than most of what they've done so far this season. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with a recap of the six man tag which still isn't really clear. I'm not even sure who all these people are and who they're partnering with but hopefully we get a bit better explanation as we go.

The video ends with the teams listed together and their names next to their pictures. It really is that easy and that actually helps a lot.

Andruew Tang/Big Sam/Black Mamba vs. Ash Silva/Eurasian Dragon/Jason Wong

Jason is a mystery partner and a fairly big deal. It's a brawl to start at the bell as the bad guys (I think? I honestly have almost no idea what's going on here other than Sam, who works for Mamba, cost Silva a match in the title tournament last season) attack at the handshake, which is the first clip shown on every episode. Tang, the Singapore Champion, starts off with Ash and hits a nice dropkick. A headlock keeps Ash in trouble with Tang pulling the hair. Ok so they're the heels.

Tang's bulldog is countered into something resembling a belly to back suplex and it's off to Dragon, who has apparently been feuding with Tang for years now. Tang screams about being in a wristlock and keeps screaming after Dragon lets go. So wait did the hold hurt or not? Now it's off to a test of strength with Tong kicking him in the ribs like a villain should, only to have it turn into a chop off. A tornado DDT plants Dragon as it would be nice to see the other three people actually wrestling.

Tang loads up a suplex (Tong: "SUPLEX CITY!") but Dragon is a bit too big to be pulled over. It's off to Mamba who walks right into a hiptoss. Jason comes in for a bad looking Paisan Elbow as the announcers talk about Ash and Jason developing respect for each other, thereby explaining their partnership. That should have been mentioned earlier but it's much better than not mentioning it at all.

Jason gets so sick of getting stomped that he takes off his headgear to make things serious. Sam comes in for the first time and drops

Jason with a gorilla press. You can hear Ferguson drooling over Sam and the size difference really does show here. Ash escapes a powerbomb attempt and knocks Sam down with a palm strike, followed by a high cross body for two. Sam blasts him with a clothesline (needed more follow thru) before taking Ash into the corner for some double chops.

Sam's running clothesline hits Mamba by mistake though but he makes up for it by launching Ash over the top. Unfortunately that means we have to hear about how amazing instant replay is again. Back in and a Tombstone plants Ash and it's off to Jason for a spinning side slam on Mamba. Tang kicks Jason in the back though and the heels take over again. A suplex earns a ten (on paper even) from Sam, who then comes in and does a slightly less impressive one. A top rope Hart Attack plants Jason but he easily gets the tag off to Ash.

Everything breaks down and the Dragon scores with a pop up powerbomb on Mamba. Jason picks Sam up for an AA, only to get caught in a Shell Shock from Tang. A belt shot knocks Mamba down by mistake and Mamba gets in a superkick, meaning I have to hear SUPERKICK because the Bullet Club nonsense is in China now. Ash drops a top rope splash on Mamba and, after two replays, we actually get to see the pin.

Rating: B-. Again that's on a very sliding scale but it was entertaining enough. They had the story working well enough and explained why I'm supposed to care about these people fighting. It also helps that the wrestling was decent by MKW standards and they kept things moving. I'd like to see Sam be more of a power guy instead of a wrestler who happens to be big.

Take the suplex spot for instance. Sam praised a guy for doing a suplex and then does basically the same move. That doesn't really make Sam look any more dominant, but rather makes him just look taller than the first person to do a suplex. He's the biggest standout based on looks along and Ferguson built him up very well but I didn't quite see it in the ring.

Overall Rating: B-. I'm starting to have more fun watching this show

and having a big match like this build up for several months until the payoff was a good sign. I could still go for seeing the stories be tighter though as this match has been built up for a good while but then really just popped back onto the radar in the last few weeks. At least the match was good though, which is the most important thing they can do. It's still a fun little show and next time's season finale continues the other story so all is well.

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