

MLW Battle Riot: Go Big And Then Go Home



IMG Credit: Major League Wrestling

Battle Riot

Date: July 27, 2018

Location: Melrose Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Matt Striker

I've been watching Major League Wrestling since it was brought back after a fifteen year hiatus (in other words, when it was a new company with a name that was used before) and it's already time for a big special. In this case that would be Battle Riot, featuring forty man Royal Rumble style match, albeit with pinfalls and submissions to go with over the top eliminations. Let's get to it.

The opening video explains the idea of the namesake match, which is good for the equivalent of a Money in the Bank contract. A few names are listed but I'll save them for the actual match.

Opening sequence.

Stephen DeAngelis, the former ECW ring announcer, is handling introductions tonight. The set looks pretty much the same, though with a big Battle Riot graphic and the camera a bit closer and slightly elevated.

Myron Reed vs. Kotto Brazil

Reed is making his debut. They flip around without much contact to start and it's a double nipup. Reed kicks him in the face out of the corner and knees Kotto down for two, giving us some very early frustration. Brazil takes him down into something like a kneeling YES Lock as the announcers talk about MMA taking over wrestling style. Very true indeed. Neither can hit a belly to back suplex and it's stereo crossbodies for a double knockdown. They're certainly mirroring each other so far and that's perfectly fine.

Kotto drapes him over the ropes for a kick to the floor, followed by a pair of suicide dives. Being a bit greedy, Kotto tries the third but Reed runs back in for a dropkick to send Kotto outside this time. A big dive over the top (looked good) as Striker asks if Reed's bleach blond hair is a tribute to Butch Reed, sending Tony into a short fit of laughter. Kotto grabs a suplex and puts on a modified Sharpshooter (he leans down on the back instead of stepping over) but Reed is too close to the ropes.

A nipup gets Reed out of the way of a standing Lionsault and he plants Kotto with a cutter. The 450 hits knees and gets reversed into a small package as the fans are rather pleased. Back up and Reed's Stundog Millionaire (not a cutter Striker) doesn't do much good as Kotto hits a running Sliced Bread (definitely not a cutter Tony) for the pin at 9:05.

Rating: C. Both guys need some polishing and it should have been a minute or two shorter but this was the right way to go for an opening match. You get the fans going with some fun high flying and let everyone have a good time out there. Brazil is starting to become a nice player and I could see him getting a shot at the new Middleweight Title before too long.

Maxwell J. Friedman isn't concerned about facing Joey Ryan tonight because he's too excited about being in New York City. It's his hometown and he's going to become the first Middleweight Champion. Why? He's just better than Joey.

Konnan is ready to come out of retirement in the Battle Riot. He'll be on point like a decimal.

We get a vignette of skulls saying the dead will rise. LA Park is coming.

Joey Ryan had to drop five pounds to make weight, meaning he had to drop all lollipops and baby oil. No one is holding Friedman's wealth against him but Ryan is rich too. The difference is Ryan made it in a wrestling ring, meaning he's really good at this. He's bringing sleazy back and he's bringing the Middleweight Title with it. This was completely different than most Ryan promos I've seen and it worked very well. He can do serious (with a little sleaze thrown in) and that's always nice to see.

Team Filthy draws their numbers (sweet) and Tom Lawlor doesn't want to talk about his loss to Jimmy Havoc. He let the match end for the sake of Havoc's health you see. He's filthy, but he's a thoughtful filthy.

Middleweight Title: Maxwell Jacob Friedman vs. Joey Ryan

This is for the inaugural (good looking) title and Ryan has only wrestled once for the promotion, which was last year in a loss to Friedman. Joey brings a lollipop with him and hands it to a fan. Tony: "Now that we've got that out of the way." The oil goes down the trunks and we're ready to go. Maxwell's waistlock is broken up by Joey reaching his hand towards the crotch and that's not cool.

They fight over a far less gropey wristlock until Ryan again tries to get him to touch it. Friedman agrees to touch it if they shake hands.

Striker: "If you build it they will come. Pardon me." Tony: "I'll never be able to watch that movie again." I really wouldn't mention movies after saying that line Tony. Friedman misses a right hand but scores with a flying armbar, followed by a regular armbar to get us away from the odd stuff for a change. Tony equates this to the Andersons, but I don't remember Arn giving fans lollipops.

The hold doesn't last long as Ryan comes back with a reverse t-bone suplex as Matt goes into a weird rant about millennials. Tony: "I'm getting hot just listening to you talking about it." Friedman stomps on the arm and spits at Ryan, who actually seems to be offended. They ram heads and Friedman is very wobbly, eventually falling head first into Joey's crotch.

Joey pops up and no sells an atomic drop, which hurts Friedman's knee. Striker: "WHY WOULD THAT HURT???" He also thinks there might be something in there. I'm not touching that one (no pun intended) and it's a lollipop being pulled from the trunks. It goes into Friedman's mouth but he pokes Ryan in the eye instead. The package shoulder breaker gives Friedman the title at 7:55.

Rating: D+. This is a situation of knowing what you're going for and I don't think it hit. The match was for the inaugural title and they just had a comedy match instead of fighting hard to become champion. They cut good, serious promos coming into the match but that didn't match the tone here. It was nice to have the arm stuff and there was a story going on but it was fighting with the comedy stuff for time.

Post match Friedman spits out the lollipop and brags about how awesome he is. After calling the interviewer a dollar store Oprah, he says you can cut the line when you're this good. He's a supernova and everyone needs to get in their Honda Civic and get more bags of Cheetos while they watch someone better than them.

Sami Callihan and his cronies pick their names. Sami stops the tumbler, hands them their numbers and draws his own.

We look back at Low Ki winning the World Title last week.

Swoggle is underneath the tumbler to draw, even though Sami and company were said to be the last people picking. The interviewer says she hopes it's a lucky one. Swoggle: "Because of the leprechaun thing. I bet one of the WWE writers gave you that one." And I'd bet that you probably wouldn't be here without those writers. He looks at his number and says it's the old Bushwhacker Luke. That sounds like something a WWE writer would have booked in the first place.

Video on Shane Strickland having issues with Salina de la Renta and eventually losing the title.

Salina is proud of Low Ki for forming a partnership with his Black Friday Management. Low Ki is ready to fight anyone from any company. He was in the original MLW and part of Gary Hart's Black Friday Management. Low Ki

has had to survive in New York City and no one can ever deny his ability to fight.

Battle Riot

It's a forty man Royal Rumble with pinfalls, submissions or over the top eliminations with one minute intervals. The winner gets a World Title shot anytime anywhere. Pentagon Jr. is in at #1 and Fenix is in at #2 for a guaranteed hot start. They fight over some rollups to start and trade kicks to the head for a double knockdown and it's Brody King in after about 75 seconds (no company can get these clocks right). King hits some clotheslines but the brothers get together and double team him down in short order.

Ken Doane (Kenny of the Spirit Squad) is in at #4 and the SPIRIT SQUAD chants begin. Tom Lawlor is in at #5 to crank up the star power. A rear naked choke gets rid of King in a hurry Lance Anoa'i (son of Samu) is in at #6 but the Bros are ready with chops. Rey Horus (El Dragon Azteca Jr. from Lucha Underground) is in at #7 and a bunch of people start kicking each other in the head. Fenix misses a double stomp to Doane on the apron but the ramp saves him, which is another unique way of doing things.

Kevin Sullivan of all people is in at #8 and he wastes no time in using the golden spike. Lawlor chokes him out in less than thirty seconds, which Striker puts over as a huge deal. I get the idea but he's 68 years old. The huge Fallah Bahh is in at #9 and crushes Horus with a crossbody but there's no elimination. Swoggle is in at #10 (Bushwhacker Luke never had that number) and starts biting some people's tights. That gives us a grouping of Pentagon, Fenix, Doane, Lawlor, Lance, Horus, Bahh and Swoggle.

A series of German suplexes (Striker: "He's small so let's call it an Austrian suplex. Do you get it?") have almost everyone down until Lance kicks him in the head. Samu, as in Lance's father, is in at #11 for a series of headbutts. Father and son headbutts put Bahh down but Lance dumps his dad. ACH is in at #12 as the ring is getting pretty full. That goes nowhere so it's Konnan in at #13 (to a big pop). An ST0 into the Tequila Sunrise takes Lawlor down with ACH making a save.

Barrington Hughes is in at #14 for the big man showdown with Bahh, as Pentagon Backstabs ACH for the elimination (not mentioned or shown but you can hear the three count). Bahh and Hughes bang into each other for the old monster battle. Tony: "IT'S THE BELLY BUMP!!!" Swoggle interrupts and Lawlor chokes him out for an elimination. Jimmy Yuta is in at #15 as Lance and Doane get crushed in the corner for a double pin, even though Lance's shoulders weren't down.

Konnan gets knocked down and pinned as well, followed by the Bros backdropping Bahh out. The momentum takes the two of them out as well as we lose six people in about ten seconds. Kotto Brazil is in at #16 and hits Yuta with a slingshot spear. Horus takes another splash in the corner and it's Richard Holliday (pretty standard looking guy who is described as marketable) in at #17. A few stomps to the back are cut off with a Hughes chop in the corner.

Fred Yehi is in at #18 and slugs it out with Brazil, who gets planted with an Alabama Slam into a faceplant (that's a new one). Lawlor adds a powerslam for two with Horus not being able to make a save in time. Jason Cade is in at #19 and immediately gets in a fight with Yuta. That goes nowhere so everyone goes after Hughes, who tosses Horus as an appetizer. They get him out, but he takes Yuta, Cade and Holliday with him, leaving Lawlor alone in the ring. Teddy Hart is in at #20 for what could be an interesting showdown. Well at least it could be if Hart didn't go up and moonsault onto the pile of people outside to eliminate himself.

Vandal Ortagun is in at #21 and a cross armbreaker gets rid of him in about thirty seconds. Mikey Mondo (also of the Spirit Squad) is in at #22 and gets choked out just as fast (though he never stops blowing the whistle, even after being knocked out). PCO (Pierre Carl Ouellet is in at #23 and I'm curious about this as I've heard so many great things about his newest run. Lawlor's Crossface doesn't work so he punches PCO in the face. A chokebomb plants Lawlor for no cover as LA Smooth (son of Afa, brother of Manu and Samu) is in at #24.

PCO gets knocked down in the corner for the Umaga hip attack but pops back up with a clothesline to get rid of Smooth. Simon Gotch is in at #25 and slugs away at PCO, who knocks him down without much effort. Team

Filthy beats on PCO until Homicide is in at #26. Lawlor and Gotch stand back and let him work over PCO until Davey Boy Smith Jr. is in at #27. With everyone other than PCO in a Tower of Doom, the Blue Meanie of all people is in at #28 for some dancing.

Homicide joins him for a bit before tossing him out without much effort. Team Filthy gets rid of PCO (I can get why he's hot right now as he's huge and has a good look. I've also heard very good things about his Frankenstein inspired promos.) Michael Patrick of the Dirty Blonds is in at #29 and stands in the middle of the ring so everyone can bring it. Sami Callihan is in at #30 and gets rid of Homicide, giving us Lawlor, Gotch, Smith, Scott and Callihan. Everyone gets knocked down with Sami alone on one side (good visual) and Sawyer Fulton is in at #31 to give Sami some help.

Shane Strickland is in at #32 and goes right for Sami, which isn't the most surprising thing in the world. Fulton cuts Shane off with a low blow until Leon Scott (Sami's other crony) is in at #33. A double clothesline gets rid of Davey (fans are NOT happy) and Drago is in at #34. The ring is getting full again as everyone chops away. Leo Bryan (Wasn't that spelled Brien before?) is in at #35 but the Blonds can't get rid of Gotch. Joey Ryan is in at #36 and gets Sami all the way to the apron (Tony: "One is sick and the other is sicker.").

Maxwell Jacob Friedman is in at #37 and goes right after Ryan to keep up their earlier issues. Team Lawlor gets together to dump both Ryan and Friedman and Jake Hager is in at #38. Hager knocks Scott out and saves himself from Sami and Fulton. John Hennigan is in at #39 and dives over the top with a clothesline to Sami in a sweet entrance. Hennigan dumps Patrick and Hager/Bryan get rid of Gotch. It's Jimmy Havoc in at #40, giving us a final grouping of Lawlor, Bryan, Callihan, Fulton, Strickland, Drago, Hager, Hennigan and Havoc.

Drago is out first to get us down to eight. Shane's top rope double stomp hits Bryan and that's enough to get rid of him. Hennigan saves himself from Sami and rolls Fulton up for an elimination. Shane tosses Havoc and saves himself from being eliminated by Sami. That's not good enough for Sami, who piledrives Shane on the apron to get rid of him. Lawlor chokes

Sami out on the apron to get us down to Lawlor, Hennigan and Hager. Not bad for a final trio and certainly three of the bigger names. The Moonlight Drive is broken up and Hager shoves Hennigan out to give us the final two.

A powerslam plants Lawlor for two but he's back with a triangle choke over the corner. The fans are behind Lawlor (the underdog here in a bit of a twist on the booking), even as he's powerbombed out of the corner. Hager gets caught in a German suplex but Lawler can't follow up due to exhaustion.

They slug it out with Lawlor getting the better of it (UFC > Bellator it seems) and firing off some YES Kicks. It's off to the rear naked choke and Hager is in trouble. He spins out into an ankle lock for a good while but Lawlor climbs the corner and pulls Hager out for the win at 49:58.

Rating: C. This was a tale of two matches with the first half not being much and the second half being a lot of fun. I get why they bumped it up to forty (it did have a great ring to it) and the match was perfectly fine, but it would have flowed better with thirty people instead of forty. Still though, for their first big event, this was far from bad and the ending made Lawlor look like a star.

Post match Lawlor says he's earned what he deserves whenever he wants it. The L in MLW now stands for Lawlor.

Overall Rating: C+. While not great, it's a strong enough first special and I could see them doing even better when they have more experience. Lawlor looked great, we have a new title, and it's easy to build some feuds off of the main event. This show has done more than a lot of other promotions can't do: establish a strong baseline that you know they won't go underneath. Things are good around here at the moment and I want to see where things go from here.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the paperback edition of KB's Complete 2003 Monday Night Raw Reviews (also available as an e-book) from Amazon. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/07/23/new-book-kbs-complete-2003-monday-night-raw-reviews/>

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

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