

Wrestler of the Day – March 5: Big E. Langston

Today we enter the world of power lifting with Big E. Langston.

Big E. started down in FCW back in late 2009 so we'll pick up his career on February 14, 2010 in a tag team match.

Big E. Langston/Skip Sheffield vs. Vance Archer/Alex Riley

Sheffield is now known as Ryback and is a cowboy here. The announcers sound like they've never seen Langston before so maybe this is his debut. Langston runs Riley over to start and it's quickly off to Sheffield for some shoulders of his own. Archer comes in and is easily slammed for Langston gets the tag to do nothing at all. Vance kicks Sheffield in the face for two and it's back to Riley as the cowboy is in trouble. We hit the chinlock for a bit before both guys try cross bodies and fall to the floor. Langston comes in off the hot tag to clean house but Riley escapes the Big Ending and hits a powerbomb into a neckbreaker for the pin.

Rating: C-. Nice idea for the debut here with Langston looking good but the ending stoppe Langston cold. Langston would get better but you can't teach raw power like he has and displayed here. Riley also had so much potential but allegedly reacted badly to a rib from Cena in the Raw locker room and lost his push.

We'll jump ahead about a year to March 27, 2011 with Langston having grown up a bit and facing Leo Kruger.

Leo Kruger vs. Big E. Langston

Langston shoves him around with ease to start and Leo bails to the floor. A headlock is countered with an easy lift into the air before Langston

casually trips him to the mat in a nice touch. Kruger rolls to the apron and snaps Big E.'s throat across the top rope to take over. The referee gets bumped but pops back up to see Kruger hit a neckbreaker to send Langston outside. Back in and Langston shoves Kruger away before scoring with some hard clotheslines. A belly to belly suplex gets two but Kruger rolls him up and grabs the ropes for a pin.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but Kruger has almost always been a better character than a worker. Langston was starting to look more and more like his more familiar version but he's still not completely rounded into form. Also I didn't realize how often he got pinned in FCW as it's quite different from his win/loss record on Raw.

We'll wrap up his FCW run with this stacked six man tag from sometime in June 2011.

Big E. Langston/Calvin Raines/Alexander Rusev vs. Bo Rotundo/Leakee/Richie Steamboat

Raines is a big guy and Langston's FCW Tag Team Championship partner. FCW Champion Rotundo is now known as Bo Dallas and Leakee is Roman Reigns. Rusev and Richie get things going with Steamboat going after Alexander's huge calves. Rusev easily throws him away and scores with a shoulder but it's quickly off to Bo and then Leakee (pronounced Lay Ah Key) to stay on the arm. Alexander easily runs over Leakee before it's off to Langston for more power offense as we take a break.

Back with Raines running over Leakee for two and putting on something resembling a seated full nelson. Leakee comes back with a sunset flip before running over for the tag to Steamboat. Richie cleans house for a bit until Rusev slams him off the top with ease. Back to Langston who stomps away and hits a spinning belly to belly for two. Rusev comes in again for a bearhug and an overhead belly to belly.

A double tag brings in Raines vs. Steamboat and Ricky is caught in an

abdominal stretch. Back to Langston who isn't hurt by Steamboat chops but a kick to the face has some more effect. The hot tag brings in Bo to clean house as everything breaks down. Bo and Langston are left alone in the ring and a spear is enough to pin Big E.

Rating: B-. I liked this a lot more than I expected to. They followed the six man formula very well here and the whole thing worked quite well. These guys knew how to work together and everything flowed well. That being said, I need to pick better matches the next time I do one of these things. Langston is now 0-3.

Langston made his Raw debut in December as an enforcer for Dolph Ziggler, but around this time he was still a monster in NXT. One night the Shield cleaned out the NXT locker room and stood tall in the ring. Now in a good promotion, the unstoppable monster would come out for a big showdown. Thankfully NXT is a good promotion and Langston made his way to the ring for a faceoff with Roman Reigns. The next week, Langston got a title shot at NXT Champion Seth Rollins.

NXT Title: Seth Rollins vs. Big E. Langston

No DQ and Rollins is defending. Rollins doesn't have music yet. After the big match intros we're ready to go. Langston grabs a kick and shoves Rollins down to start, freaking Seth out. The champion grabs a front facelock and gets shoved into the corner for some shoulder blocks. Langston misses a charge into the corner and hits the post, but immediately comes back with a gorilla press to send Rollins to the floor.

Langston goes after him but here are Reigns and Ambrose for the triple beatdown. Big E. gets sent into the steps as we take a break. Back with both guys in the ring again with Rollins firing off kicks to the ribs. Rollins hooks a triangle choke but Langston fights up and hits an electric chair drop to escape. The crowd is ENTIRELY behind Langston here as he fires off clotheslines. A double clothesline takes down Ambrose and Reigns but they run in again to break up the Big Ending.

Some guys from the locker room come out to try to stop the non-champions of the Shield but are quickly dispatched. Eventually about 15 guys come out and FINALLY clear them out, leaving it one on one. Rollins hits the standing Sliced Bread for two and the knockout scares him to death. He loads it up again, but Langston catches him on his shoulder and the Big Ending gives Langston the title at 6:38 shown of 10:08.

Rating: C+. The match itself wasn't much, but the run-ins were handled perfectly, making this feel like a huge moment and a nearly Attitude Era style main event. I also really like the idea of not having Langston beat up the Shield on his own as it keeps things a bit more realistic given how strong Shield has been pushed. Not a great match, but really good booking of a title change.

After having debuted on the 2013 Slammies, Langston would make his in ring debut in a Tag Team Title match at Wrestlemania XXIX.

Tag Titles: Big E. Langston/Dolph Ziggler vs. HELL NO

HELL NO is defending. This was set up by Ziggler beating Kane and Bryan in singles matches and wanting a title match as a result. This is also Langston's debut. We get a funny bit to start with Ziggler kissing AJ to taunt Bryan and getting kicked in the head for a VERY close two ala last year. Ziggler bails to the floor and gets caught with a suicide dive. Back in and Bryan fires off the hard kicks to the chest but the big one to the head misses.

Ziggler dives off to tag in Langston and he gets Kane. Big E. easily catches a charging Kane and hits three straight backbreakers to take over. Kane gets a boot up in the corner to stop a charging Langston but the chokeslam is easily broken up. Langston runs over Kane and it's back to Ziggler for some quick choking. Langston comes in again for more shots to Kane's chest and ribs. He lowers his head though and there's a DDT from Kane to put Langston down.

Back to Dolph who breaks up a tag to Bryan, only to miss a splash in the corner. Kane's side slam gets two but the top rope clothesline misses. The Fameasser kind of misses but Bryan comes in for the save anyway. Ziggler jumps into an uppercut from Kane but Langston splashes Kane for the save at two. The Big Ending is broken up and Kane sends Big E. to the floor for the knee from Bryan. The Zig Zag gets two on Kane and Dolph is frustrated. AJ slides in the briefcase but Kane ducks Ziggler's swing. The chokeslam connects and Kane takes out Langston. The Swan Dive from Bryan retains the titles at 6:30.

Rating: C. My predictions are taking a pounding tonight. I would assume this means Ziggler cashes in tonight, because we should totally buy him as world champion after he loses to Bryan here right? The match was fine, but at this point there's no need to see HELL NO with the belts anymore. It's just dull at this point and they stopped being funny a long time ago.

Dolph Ziggler won the World Heavyweight Championship the next night on Raw but got injured soon thereafter. With Dolph out, Langston started a feud with Alberto Del Rio and faced him about five times in three weeks, including May 31, 2013 on Smackdown.

Big E. Langston vs. Alberto Del Rio

Langston pounds him into the corner to start and fires off some shoulders, but Del Rio comes back with a kick to the ribs. Big E. drapes him across the top rope and Del Rio is right back down. Del Rio comes back with more kicks and a running clothesline, only to walk into a belly to belly for two. The Backstabber staggers Langston and a German suplex puts him down again.

A hard kick to the face gets two more for Alberto and there's the armbreaker but Langston picks Alberto up to escape. Langston runs him over for two but gets caught in the armbreaker over the ropes. Del Rio falls to the floor and gets posted after an AJ distraction, allowing the

Big Ending to finish Albert back inside at 4:50.

Rating: D+. This match is firmly in the category of matches we don't need to see for a good while. They've fought something like four times in two weeks now, which is way more than any pair should be going at it. The match was nothing special either as they didn't have time to go anywhere with it.

Langston went on a tear through the midcard, earning himself an Intercontinental Title shot on Raw on November 18, 2013.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. Langston vs. Curtis Axel

They treat this as a big deal with full entrances and the big match intros. Axel, the champion, is officially no longer a Paul Heyman guy. Langston easily takes him to the mat but gets elbowed in the face to give Axel a breather. Big E. easily tosses Axel around and sends him to the floor to start a chase. Back in and Langston clotheslines him down like it's nothing as this is one sided so far.

A standing backdrop gets two on the champion but he hits a quick hot shot to get a breather. Axel pounds on his back a bit and we take a break. Back with Axel getting two off a dropkick and hooking a front facelock. Langston finally gets up and just throws Curtis off of him before scoring with some clotheslines. A belly to belly puts Axel down and there's the Warrior Splash for two. The straps come down and the Big Ending gives Langston the title at 8:50.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but it does beg the question: if they want to make Langston into a big deal, why in the world would you job him clean to Del Rio last week in four minutes? Either way, it was definitely the right idea to switch the belt here as Axel is long past the point of mattering. A gimmick change could help him a lot at the moment because the potential is definitely there.

Around this time WWE started making up challengers of the month for Langston, including this one against Damien Sandow at TLC 2013.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. Langston vs. Damien Sandow

Before the match, Sandow tells the Texas crowd some assorted phrases that are worthless: y'all, ye if followed by haw, and Big E. Langston: Intercontinental Champion. Nice touch. Langston throws the challenger into the corner to start and hits a corner splash to keep Damien in trouble. They head outside with Langston in trouble, only to miss a charge into the post to change momentum.

Back in and Damien pounds away at Big E.'s head before putting on a chinlock. The Wind-Up Elbow gets two for Sandow and we're back to the chinlock again. Langston powers out of the hold and drops Damien with an electric chair. A belly to belly sets up the Warrior Splash for two but the Big Ending is countered into an Edge-0-Matic for two by Sandow. Another Big Ending attempt is countered into a small package for two but Langston is done messing around. He runs Sandow over with ease and the Big Ending is enough to retain the title at 6:25.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing you wouldn't see on Smackdown. These two did virtually the same match with the same story earlier this year for Langston's NXT Title so there was some practice coming in. Langston has a bright future and a title defense on PPV isn't going to hurt him at all.

Having destroyed the midcard, Langston was given a non-title match against WWE Champion Randy Orton on January 10, 2014's Smackdown.

Randy Orton vs. Big E. Langston

Non-title of course. Langston takes him down with a shoulder block but Orton rolls to the floor before a cover. Back in and a headlock sets up

another shoulder block sends Orton to the floor again. Orton comes in again and punches Big E. down, only to walk into a headbutt for two. Langston sends Orton to the mat with a single right hand to the ribs before slapping on an armbar.

Orton fights up again and pounds on Big E., only to get caught in a backbreaker. A second backbreaker gets two and Langston is getting in a zone. Randy escapes the Big Ending and bails to the floor as we take a break. Back with the chinlock until Big E. powers out, only to get kneed in the ribs for two. Back to the chinlock but Big E. fights up again.

The comeback is short lived again though as Orton sends him through the ropes to the floor. Langston is sent into the steps twice in a row for two before we hit the chinlock again. Big E. fights up one more time and runs Orton over twice in a row, followed by a belly to belly suplex. The Warrior Splash gets two but Orton hits his backbreaker to get a breather. The RK0 is countered with a splash in the corner but Orton pokes Big E. in the eye, setting up the RK0 for the pin at 14:28.

Rating; C+. I missed pokes to the eyes. They're such a simple heel move but they can be just what you need to get a heel through an ending. This match worked for the most part but it could have had a few minutes of chinlocks taken out. It's good that Langston gets to look like he can hang in there against top guys. There's a future there if he's used properly.

We'll wrap it up with what has become too rare anymore: an Intercontinental Title defense on PPV against Jack Swagger, who won a four way on Smackdown to earn the shot.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Jack Swagger

Swagger is challenging and Colter does his usual schtick before the match. Big E. shoves him into the corner to start and runs him over with a hard shoulder block, sending Swagger to the outside. Back in and some

overhead belly to belly suplexes put Jack down but he bails to the floor again to avoid a charging champion. This time Big E. follows him outside and sends him into the steps but the champion goes after Colter.

The distraction doesn't work though as he spears Jack into the steps in a painful looking spot. Back inside and Jack low bridges Big E. out to the floor and takes over with some running knees in the corner. After a WE THE PEOPLE it's off to a front facelock for a few moments. Big E. fights up and a double clothesline puts both guys down again. Swagger avoids a charge and Big E. goes shoulder first into the post, drawing a WE THE PEOPLE chant from the crowd.

Back up and Big E. runs Swagger over with clotheslines and a belly to belly suplex but the champion charges into a powerslam for two. The running Vader Bomb is caught in the Big Ending but Jack makes it to the apron. That's fine with Big E. as he spears him through the ropes in a big crash. Back in and the Warrior Splash gets two so Big E....goes up top? Jack catches him with a right hand and runs the ropes for a belly to belly superplex and a VERY close two.

Swagger takes out the leg and puts on the Patriot Lock but Big E. kicks his way out. The gutwrench is countered but Big E. runs him over and takes down the straps. Jack grabs another Patriot Lock but Big E. fights up and hits an enziguri of all things, setting up the Big Ending to retain the title at 11:50.

Rating: B. I liked this far better than I was expecting with Swagger putting up a great fight and making it much closer than he had any right to. It's nice to see Big E. get a win on PPV and a successful title defense over a former World Champion never hurt anyone. It should be interesting to see where the Real Americans go from here.

Overall Langston is a guy with a ton of potential and the fact that he only started about five years ago is astounding. He's incredibly strong but there's far more to him than most power guys. Langston once said on

Twitter that “When you look like I do, people don’t expect you to think that much.” I love it when people think like that and his career has shown the same promise ever since. He’ll be a big deal one day and he’s been very solid so far in his career.

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