

Mae Young Classic Episode Six – This is What I Signed Up For

Mae Young Classic Episode #6

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's time to finish up the second round and get us down to the final eight. That means we have some big names facing some other big names on this show and that should be a lot of fun. I've managed to avoid as many spoilers as possible and it's amazing how much more entertaining a show like this can be when that's the case. Let's get to it.

We open with the standard recap of the previous show and tonight's preview.

Opening sequence.

We see Ronda Rousey and the Four Horsewomen arriving earlier. Gee I wonder who is making the finals.

Video on Toni Storm, who wants to fight and win.

Video on Lacey Evans, who is everything a modern woman is supposed to be.

Second Round: Toni Storm vs. Lacey Evans

They fight over a headlock to start with Toni getting the better of it. Lacey grabs one of her own with a fairly serious look on her face until a kick to the chest puts her down again. Storm tries a bit too flashy hip attack and gets rolled up for two for her efforts. A legsweep from the apron into a slingshot elbow gives Lacey two and it's time to work on the arm.

Storm goes back to the strikes to get a breather and it's a Backstabber (not a Codebreaker JR) to put Lacey down in the corner.

Lacey comes back with a good looking swinging neckbreaker, only to walk into Strong Zero (modified White Noise onto the knee) to send Storm on at 5:08.

Rating: C-. I'm digging Storm (good look, strong enough work) so far as she's got a bit of a charisma that is helping her stand out. Hopefully she's sticking around for awhile as I could see her going somewhere with the right coaching. Evans' gimmick is kind of odd as she has the serious military background but looks like one of the Andrews Sisters in the ring. I liked her when I saw her live but it's not quite working this time.

Video on Mia Yim, who has been working specifically to be the best.

Video on Shayna Baszler, who has combat experience.

Second Round: Mia Yim vs. Shayna Baszler

Of note: Baszler, one of MMA's Four Horsewomen, walks past Charlotte, Becky Lynch and Bayley with only a passing glance. An exchange of kicks naturally goes to Baszler (JR: "Some people enjoy going to the mall. I think she'd go to the mall just to beat people up.") but Mia knocks her outside for a heck of a suicide dive. Back in and Baszler rolls some gutwrench suplexes for two but gets caught in the Tarantula (with JR calling Tajiri a handsome rascal).

An ankle lock cuts Mia off again but she's right back with some strikes to the face for two. Not that it matters as Baszler knees her hard in the face for a knockdown and it's right back to the ankle lock. Mia kicks her way to freedom and is able to powerbomb Baszler for two because ankle injuries aren't a thing. Just in case you thought it was a thing, Mia tries a 450 but gets caught in a rear naked choke for the tap at 5:36.

Rating: B-. Lack of selling aside, I'm sad to see Mia go out so early. For a long time I never got her appeal but she grew on me a lot during the tournament. That being said, Baszler is someone they're going to push very hard in this thing due to the Four Horsewomen affiliation. It would surprise me if we didn't see a four on four match at Wrestlemania and that would be just fine.

Post match Shayna celebrates with her friends before going over to the wrestling Horsewomen to throw up the hand signs. Fans: "YES! YES! YES!"

Video on Dakota Kai, who is a fast striker. A striker? In a women's wrestling tournament?

Video on Rhea Ripley, who is big and strong but young.

Second Round: Dakota Kai vs. Rhea Ripley

The much bigger Ripley works on a headlock before diving over Kai, who snaps off some armdrags. A dropkick sends Ripley into the corner before a running kick to the chest makes things even worse. Ripley gets sent outside and drops her face first onto the apron for another two. Some running knees to the chest give Ripley the same and frustration is setting in.

The full nelson slam is broken up by a kick to the head, followed by a running dropkick. One heck of a running kick to the face in the corner gives Kai two, only to have Ripley superkick her away. A northern lights suplex drops Kai for two more and Ripley looks stunned. They head up top with Ripley getting caught in the Tree of Woe for the top rope double stomp to send Kai on at 7:03.

Rating: B-. Another good match, though this only sends Kai on to be Sane's latest victim. Ripley has every tool you could possibly need to be a huge star and I'm sure she's going to be just fine down in developmental. Kai looked great as well and should be just fine if she sticks around with NXT. Good match here as Ripley continues to impress.

Video on Candice LeRae, who will give everything she has to win this.

Video on Nicole Savoy, who loves to suplex people. She must have been miserable in the first round then as she didn't do a single one.

Johnny Gargano is here. I love how these wrestlers are ushered in and out every match.

Second Round: Candice LeRae vs. Nicole Savoy

JR talks about PWG and my head threatens to explode. Lita on the other hand slips up a bit by saying Savoy's previous match was last night. Savoy kicks away a handshake offer and we're ready to go. The fans, with a decidedly female sounding voice, are behind Candice. Savoy sends her into the corner for a crash but LeRae comes right back out with a jumping Downward Spiral for two.

The first suplex drops LeRae for two and they trade modified surfboards. Candice elbows her way out of trouble and hits a Codebreaker for a breather. Savoy rolls some butterfly suplexes but can't get a cross armbreaker. Another kick to the head gives Candice a breather and it's off to something like a Black Widow to slow Savoy down. For some reason Savoy takes her up top and even old man JR knows it's a bad idea to put LeRae up top when her finisher comes from there. As you might expect, Ms. LeRae's Wild Ride ends Savoy at 5:54.

Rating: C+. Savoy looked better here but you knew LeRae was winning here, especially with the idea of her being massacred by Baszler in the next round. This was some good storytelling with LeRae fighting from underneath and being willing to go the extra mile to beat the fighting machine. Good match here.

Again, no brackets are shown for the next round but here you are:

Mercedes Martinez

Abbey Laith

Shayna Baszler

Candice LeRae

Toni Storm

Piper Niven

Dakota Kai

Kairi Sane

Overall Rating: B. Now this is more like it. The wrestling was good from top to bottom and while a lot of the endings were obvious, there's nothing wrong with having some good wrestling where you know

who's winning. I'm digging this more and more every single episode and the fact that they've done this all in two major content drops is a great idea. Best show of the tournament so far with ease.

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Mae Young Classic – Episode Four: And There's the Winner

Mae Young Classic Episode #4

Date: August 28, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's the end of the first round here and there's a good chance we'll be seeing the tournament winner making her debut. There are a few big names still to go and that means it's time for some showcases. We'll also know the second round by the end of this episode and that means it's time for big names to collide and things to really take off. Let's get to it.

Long recap of the whole tournament so far and a preview of what we're seeing tonight.

Opening sequence.

Video on Renee Michelle who is ready to show how awesome women can be.

Video on Candice LeRae, who is one of the biggest names in the tournament. She's also married to Johnny Gargano but wants no special treatment.

Gargano is in the front row.

First Round: Candice LeRae vs. Renee Michelle

Feeling out process to start as a fan yells something that makes the crowd laugh. They trade rollups into a standoff as this is a VERY pro-Candice crowd. Candice sends her into the corner for a missile dropkick but Renee is back with kicks of her own. Renee gets kicked off and a jumping neckbreaker gives Candice two. Candice misses a charge in the corner but manages to avoid a middle rope moonsault. They head up top and it's Miss LeRae's Wild Ride (super swinging neckbreaker) for the pin on Renee at 5:37.

Rating: C-. Nothing to see here though you can tell LeRae is a step above a lot of these people. The fans are clearly into her and that's the kind of reaction that's going to guarantee at least a spot in the second round. Good enough match here with Michelle looking perfectly acceptable as well.

Video on Lacey Evans, a former Marine who has made some appearances in NXT before.

Video on Taynara Conti, a judoka from Brazil, who is ready to fight anyone.

Alexa Bliss (and I believe Bayley's fan Izzy behind her) is here.

First Round: Taynara Conti vs. Lacey Evans

The fans get behind Lacey with the USA chants as Conti fires off some knees to the ribs. An armbar has Conti in some trouble until an over the head throw takes Evans down. A shot to the chest takes Conti back down and something like a Bronco Buster has her in more trouble. Evans throws Conti on her back for a kneeling piledriver

and the pin at 4:43.

Rating: C-. Not much to see here and I'm a bit surprised that Conti, who seemed to be built up as a big deal, got beaten down that easily. Evans has been around WWE for a little while, now so her winning isn't a big shock, but that was quite the quick exit for Conti. Evans doesn't do much for me but she's got something with the ex-military thing.

Video on Reina Gonzalez, a second generation wrestler and a powerhouse.

Video on Nicole Savoy, the self-described queen of suplexes.

First Round: Nicole Savoy vs. Reina Gonzalez

Reina is sporting chaps and a Phantom of the Opera mask. You see something new every day (weekly at worst) in wrestling. Feeling out process to start with the far smaller Nicole not being able to take Gonzalez down. A hurricanrana is shoved away and a hard clothesline drops Savoy. Reina plants her again with a sidewalk slam and a reverse Boston crab, only to get pulled down into something like a Kimura. A cross armbreaker works a lot better and Reina taps at 4:46.

Rating: C-. Not the worst match in the world but Savoy didn't throw a single suplex, which was her main talking point in her video. Gonzalez was a bit slower than she probably should have been and that hurt things a lot. The ending hurt it a bit too as Nicole was dominated and then came back with two moves to win. That's not the best thing in the world, but it was at least watchable. Kind of like Reina in general.

Video on Tessa Blanchard, another second generation wrestler who turns into a different person in the ring. She's been around NXT for a good while now.

Video on Kairi Sane, a Japanese star who likes pirates. She's probably the favorite in the whole tournament.

First Round; Kairi Sane vs. Tessa Blanchard

Kairi is very pale. Feeling out process to start with Kairi putting

her on the ropes for a clean break. A cradle gives Kairi two and a running Blockbuster drops Tessa again. Tessa comes back with a running neckbreaker of her own before a middle rope Codebreaker gets two more. Some hard forearms stun Sane but she's right back with a spear to cut Tessa off.

Something like a top rope Phenomenal Forearm drops Tessa for two and the fans are split again. Tessa gets two off a belly to back suplex and a top rope backsplash gets the same. Kairi's sliding forearm is countered into a crucifix for two but she kicks Tessa down again. Kairi points to the elbow and drops one heck of a top rope elbow for the pin at 8:39.

Rating: B. I don't know if it was enough to live up to Kairi's hype but this was the best match of the first round. Tessa was more than game here and if she's not pushed at least to like halfway to the clouds (the moon might be too far this soon), I'm not sure what WWE is thinking. Sane is likely the favorite to win the thing but it was a smart idea to have her sweat a bit in the first round.

They hug post match.

We don't actually see the full second round brackets but here they are.

Abbey Laith

Rachel Evers

Princesa Sugehit

Mercedes Martinez

Nicole Savoy

Candice LeRae

Mia Yim

Shayna Baszler

Kairi Sane

Bianca Belair

Dakota Kai

Rhea Ripley

Serena Deeb

Piper Niven

Lacey Evans

Toni Storm

Overall Rating: C+. The main event alone is worth seeing and the rest of the card is more than watchable. It's a lot better now that we know who is advancing to the second round as a lot of the deadwood has been cleared out. There hasn't been that blow away match yet but the main event here was solid enough. I've liked what I've seen so far and the second round should be an upgrade, especially in match quality. Good show here and hopefully it keeps getting better.

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Ring of Honor TV – December 14, 2016: It Makes You

Appreciate NXT

Ring of Honor

Date: December 14, 2016

Location: William J. Meyers Pavilion, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Ian Riccaboni

This is another special show with the Women of Honor getting the spotlight for a change. I saw one of these shows before and had a good enough time with it though it's hard to keep caring when they only make air a few times a year. ROH has promised to make this a bigger deal for years now so it's really hard to buy their promises. Let's get to it.

Deonna Purrazzo vs. Candice LeRae

Purrazzo has been all over as of late, including on Smackdown and NXT. LeRae is from Mr. Toad's Wild Ride which pretty much guarantees that I'll be a fan. We get a quick introduction from both women so they're already one up on the WWE cruiserweights. Feeling out process to start with Purrazzo working on the arm until the much more experienced LeRae taking her down to the floor for a suicide dive.

Back in and Candice tries to run up the corner but gets dropped down onto the ropes to send us to a break. We come back with Purrazzo working on the left arm and adding in a kick to the bicep for two. A few forearms and a top rope double stomp to the back gets two for Candice. She makes things a bit odd with something like a crotch grab suplex (Did I mention she and Joey Ryan are regular partners?) for two more. Not that it matters as Purrazzo grabs another Fujiwara Armbar for the tap at 10:04.

Rating: C. Here's the problem with specials like this one: there's no story or reason to care about either of these women, at least based on what they've done in ROH. Why should I be interested in two women facing off with no characters or story behind it? This really was the definition of "just a match" and that's rarely enough to make anything work.

Veda Scott/Kennadi Brink vs. Faye Jackson/Sumie Sakai

Scott is gone from the company since this was taped. Jackson and Sakai have Solo Darling with them. Faye and Veda start things off

with the much bigger Jackson running her over. It's off to Kennedy, who is taken down with one of the worst looking hiptosses I've ever seen. Speaking of hips, Kennedy is sent face first into Jackson's, shall we say, hips, for two.

It's off to Sumie for a missile dropkick but she's taken into the heel (I'm pretty sure at least) corner. The announcers keep talking about various matches from house shows that I guess we're supposed to have seen. I mean, there's no indication of storylines or anything like that but that's pretty standard for a lot of ROH material.

Veda gets two off a spear and Solo offers a blend of her "special drink" to bring Sumie back to life. Instead it's just a tag to Faye for her stumbling elbows. Various hip theme attacks have Veda and Kennadi in trouble, including a rolling splash (Chocolate Thunder) for two on Scott. Some very bad looking heel miscommunication sees Brink drop Scott, setting up a top rope Cannonball for two on Kennadi. With Scott and Sakai on the floor, Brink grabs an Anaconda Vice for the tap at 7:34.

Rating: F+. This was one of the worst matches I've seen in a good while and it's more proof that some people just aren't ready to be on a national TV show. Jackson is clearly green and the match fell apart as a result. I'm really not a fan of her kind of offense either as it's a mixture of comedy and dominance, which isn't something that often works.

We recap Mandy Leon vs. Taeler Hendrix which is the result of Leon issuing an open challenge. Hendrix got beaten up so she sent in Jessica Havok to take care of Mandy. See, that's a simple story and while Leon's promo (saying she's a Woman of Honor over and over) wasn't great, this is better than anything else we've had so far.

Mandy Leon vs. Jessica Havok

Leon goes right after the monster and is knocked down with ease. Some HORRIBLE forearms have little effect on Jessica but a huge running legdrop misses. A wheelbarrow slam gets two on Mandy and we take a break. Back with Mandy grabbing a sleeper, only to be driven back into the corner. Something like White Noise gets two on Mandy but Havok pulls her up. Thankfully the announcers are right there to remind us about Havok being a hired gun who only wants to inflict pain. Cue Deonna Purrazzo for a distraction, allowing Mandy to grab

a rollup for the pin at 7:01.

Rating: D-. There isn't much of another way to put this: Leon looks outstanding in her gear but she's one of the worse in ring performers of this group. Then again it's not like these women get much ring time and Havok really didn't do much to help her out either. Not a good match whatsoever but they were certainly trying. Havok chokeslams them both post match.

Video on Kelly Klein, who is treated as a killer.

ODB vs. Kelly Klein

Both come in undefeated. ODB shoves her around to start and takes it outside for a ram into the post. The idea here is that Klein has been a big fish in a small pond but is now getting to fight someone with some experience and more talent. Things stay bad for Klein on the floor as ODB hits some hard chops. Back in and Klein scores with some forearms to take over as we go to a break.

We come back with Kelly still in control until ODB low bridges her outside for a breather. Some shoulders drop Klein and it's time for a few flask shots. Of booze that is, not to Klein's head. Now, because ODB is gross you see, she rams Klein's head into the buckles while simulating the shots going to her crotch. See it's funny. Klein grabs a northern lights suplex for two until ODB runs her over for the same. Not that it matters though as Klein grabs a guillotine choke for the referee stoppage at 13:05.

Rating: C+. Not bad here as Klein is continued to be treated as the undisputed star of the division. Having her beat ODB is a good idea and helps to set her up as something big...if this division ever goes anywhere. That and seeing ODB getting knocked out is always entertaining, unlike almost anything else about her.

Overall Rating: D. These shows are so hard to grade as there's almost nothing to compare them to. The matches range from horrible to watchable but I have almost no idea who these people are and there's nothing for them to build towards with all of one show every four months. Either build a division up or do something else because this is getting a bit old. Not the worst but it makes you realize how good the NXT women really are.

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