

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 – March 20, 2016 (Season 2 Premiere): When All Else Fails, Go Nintendo

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: March 20, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentators: Eddie Strong, Cam Ferguson

This is a promotion that I looked at late last year and kind of got attached to. In a rare personal note, I've actually been chatting with the promoter and one of the wrestlers so I'm hoping that the second season is a step up over the first. There are a lot of improvements that could be made but I like the core they've got here. Let's get to it.

In case you missed it, one of the perks around here is the length of the episodes. For instance, this one clocks in at 16:18 total so it's a VERY quick sit.

We're already off to a good start as the opening is set up like an old NES Tecmo wrestling game, complete with the screen jumping.

We see some clips of what looks like a six man tag. No idea what the context is there.

Promoter Adrian Gomez is in the ring when Selfie King (apparently a parody of American culture) interrupts. That's not very nice as Gomez was talking about.....I have no idea actually as the announcers talk about Selfie King wanting to face Tyler Breeze. Either way, Selfie King gets a match.

Selfie King vs. Candy Brother

Candy Brother is a guy who hands candy out to the fans, sending Ferguson into an amusing rant about how he's poisoning the teeth of our children. The graphics are set up like an NES game as well. I'm already sold. King jumps him from behind with the selfie stick but Brother (whose mask is made of candy wrappers) throws him to the floor. Back in and we get some acceptable chain wrestling with Selfie King easily being taken down to the mat.

Candy Brother (I keep wanting to call him Candy Man but I'm too much of a Brad Armstrong fan.) sits on the arm and cranks away in something called a Snickers Sunrise. Strong says the MKW Universe loves this guy and it really doesn't work for a place with so few fans. Then again it doesn't work when WWE says it either. Candy Brother grabs a Tarantula of all things as Ferguson calls this season one. They botch a headscissors takeover so it's tried again (never a good idea) before it's off to a Black Widow on King.

Ferguson keeps making me laugh as he rails against Candy Brother's love of cavities. A DDT gets two on King but he comes back with a really awkward looking clothesline. Off to a full nelson (with a Masterlock Challenge reference) for a bit before King throws him down with a German suplex. He takes WAY too long going outside but still hits a frog splash for another near fall. It took long enough that Strong plugged every single one of the company's social media sites.

There's another delay because it's time for a quick picture and the

distraction lets Brother get in a running kick to the chest. Another Black Widow is broken up (smart) and King puts him in a fireman's carry for some squats. Brother isn't all that big but that looked good, as did the Samoan drop. King's standing moonsault is actually enough for the pin, which I'd call a surprise.

Rating: D+. So here's the thing about Middle Kingdom Wrestling: for the most part, the wrestling isn't all that good. Some guys are better than others and it was clear that Brother was much better in the ring than King but this was still pretty low level looking stuff. It also didn't help that the match wasn't put together very well. Brother dominated for a long time at the beginning and then things started to come together but this could have used a few minutes cut off.

That being said, there's some stuff in here that I liked. Above all else, these two have very easily defined characters and you can tell who you're supposed to cheer for. Brother wants to make fans happy (and give them diabetes but you can't win everything) and King only cares about himself. That may not be a great story or even a story at all but you have a good guy and a bad guy which is a bigger step than so many promotions can pull off.

King was a BIG improvement over last time as well where he felt like much more of a joke than an actual wrestler. He's nothing great or anything but it's cool to see him as an actual threat to something. The match wasn't terrible and some of the spots were decent enough but it's clear that these two haven't been in the ring at a very high level all that long.

A quick preview of next week's tag match takes us out.

Overall Rating: C. I know it's a bit weird to give a show with one match a rating other than that of the match but the production stuff was an important step up here. There were more cameras and better editing (though it was jumping around more than it needed to) here to make things feel a bit more important. It still looks very low level but at least they're moving in the right direction. Get some more stories and some more characters and this could be a more enjoyable promotion. Finally the commentary is still one sided as Ferguson makes me laugh and Strong is.....well he's there too.

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