

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 – April 7, 2016: It Actually Worked

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: April 7, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentators: Eddie Strong, Pressley King

Season two started well last week but you never can tell what these shows are going to bring. In this case it's going to be a tag match with MKW Champion Dalton Bragg teaming up with the Slam, possibly to set the stage for a title match between the two down the line. Slam has been one of the best in the promotion so far so this should be fun. Let's get to it.

We get the 8 bit intro, which is still cool but could get old if there are more episodes than last season.

The opening video talks about the big tag match between Ho Ho Lun/Claude Roca, a 70 year old French wrestler and Bragg/Slam. Yeah 70 years old and still in the ring. I'm still not sure how I feel about that.

Dalton Bragg/The Slam vs. Ho Ho Lun/Claude Roca

Bragg, who now has better looking tights, starts with Roca and gets snapmared down for his trouble. King is already getting on my nerves on commentary as he's doing a horrible Elvis impression and isn't funny. We get an awkward sequence in the corner with Bragg trying a headscissors but Roca isn't ready to take it, leaving Dalton to just kind of crash. Bragg superkicks the 70 year old man before it's off to Slam vs. Lun, the latter of whom will be in WWE's cruiserweight series in a few months.

Slam tells Lun to bring it on and kicks him down, which Pressley refers to as mashing that tater. Lun avoids another kick in the corner and it's time to hide for a bit. It's back to Roca who gets kicked down again, complete with instant replay which has too many sound effects and looks like the camera is glitching more than anything else.

Roca gets two off a sunset flip (a flip pin according to Strong) before Slam kicks him down again. Everything breaks down and Slam cleans house even more before it's off to Bragg, who Roca trips to the mat before cranking on the legs. Strong doesn't think Bragg has ever fought anyone with Roca's experience. You know, of all those people with fifty years' experience. Roca actually gets in a surfboard while Lun is walking around with a kendo stick for no apparent reason.

The hold doesn't last long so Bragg kicks him in the head, meaning it's time for a tag off to Lun. Slam comes back in for a side slam as Bragg drops a top rope legdrop. Naturally Pressley is talking about A Million Little Pieces as Roca hits his partner by mistake, allowing Slam to send Bragg into both of them in the corner. A double DDT gets two on Roca/Lun, followed by a top rope forearm to drop Lun again. The fans aren't exactly thrilled by this.

Lun gets two off a dropkick as Pressley continues to babble incoherently without being funny. Slam gets double teamed and Roca hammers away, only to have Slam get away for the tag. Bragg starts hammering away but we get another awkward moment. That's fine with

Claude who uses his experience to hit Dalton in the face over and over. Cue the overly large King Michael to blast Bragg in the head with a kendo stick, allowing Roca to throw Bragg in an airplane spin, which also knocks Slam out to the floor. Roca actually goes up top for a high cross body and the pin on Bragg for a big upset.

Rating: C+. I liked this a lot more than I was expecting with Roca being limited but still more than capable of doing things in the ring. The ending wasn't the best idea in the world but there really isn't anyone you want to see lose in there. It's an entertaining match and helped set up Bragg's first challenger so it's decent wrestling and well booked, save for maybe the person taking the fall. At least it wasn't clean though.

Post match Slam is ticked and throws the MKW belt at Bragg. Dalton says he wants to fight King Michael for the title tonight. Well next week but you get the idea. Bragg isn't the best talker but it got the point across.

Overall Rating: C. Pressley is the biggest reason to downgrade this as he was driving me crazy with his unfunny comedy stuff and adding nothing whatsoever. I can get behind these shows being one match long and the storyline stuff at the end helps a lot. That's the thing I'm not wild about here: everything is a one off match without much being built up for the future. At least with this you get a title match set up for the future and even the long term feud with Bragg vs. the Slam. Well done here but please get Ferguson back.

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