

Middle Kingdom Wrestling – May 11, 2016: What I Asked For

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: May 11, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentators: Eddie Strong, Cam Ferguson

This promotion is in a kind of weird place as they haven't had much storyline stuff this season but the standalone shows have been more fun and definitely better presented than a lot of the stuff from last season. I still like what I'm seeing and the shows are still short enough to make these easy sits. Let's get to it.

Standard opening sequence.

Len Bai says something to someone named Tony Trivaldo but I could barely make any of it out. I'm not sure if I was supposed to understand this but if I was, they REALLY need to work on their audio.

Trivaldo, a French wrestling champion, is here to go after Bai for hurting Dalton Bragg's arm.

In something you don't see every day, we cut back and forth between the two as they respond to each other. Bai isn't scared and Trivaldo promises to make Bai regret this. Then Bai bites into something that looked like a piece of chicken.

Len Bai vs. Tony Trivaldo

Trivaldo is definitely the face here and does a decent enough job of playing to the crowd early on. Some armdrags take Bai down to start but he blocks the third as Strong talks about how this has been brewing for some time but thankfully Ferguson points out how weak of a line that is. A dropkick puts Bai on the floor but he comes back with a snapmare and basement dropkick for two as the announcers keep bickering.

Off to a reverse cross armbreaker but Trivaldo powers him up into a sitout powerbomb before nipping up and completely failing to get the crowd to clap with him. Well at least he's trying. Bai counters a backdrop into a DDT and fires off strikes to cut off a comeback (During which Trivaldo tried the clapping thing again and got NOTHING. This time he even looked at the crowd as if to say "come on work with me here." Again, the fact that he's trying is what matters.). A running basement dropkick in the corner before we hit the Figure Four Neck Lock on Trivaldo.

Back up and Tony uppercuts him before trying to get a chant going, only to have a few fans tell him he sucks. Bai grabs a guillotine choke so Tony throws him with a northern lights suplex. Back up and a German suplex sends Bai flying and he pulls off the turnbuckle pad for a cool visual. Apparently Eddie kicks the turnbuckle pad away, thereby screwing up the audio in the process. Well he can't do everything around here. Bai sends him head first into the exposed buckle setting up a spinning fisherman's brainbuster (minus most of the busting) to give Bai the pin.

Rating: C. I was liking the match and there's something cool about seeing people who you'll never likely see otherwise getting a chance to show off in something like this. It also helps to have two people who clearly have some ring experience as it can be kind of tiresome watching people who aren't entirely sure what they're doing. The turnbuckle thing was fine for an ending, though I really hope they don't get rid of Ferguson like they were suggesting in the annotations on Youtube, as he's pretty regularly the most entertaining thing about the show.

We recap the events that set up the six man that has been shown in the opening sequence on every episode of this season. Ash is still mad at Da Li Sam for costing him his tournament match last season by sending him into the post. Then Black Mamba cost Ash a match against Jason....and then it gets a bit confusing. There's something about a mystery partner and Andrew Tag, a champion from another promotion. One of Ash's partners seems to think he's a superhero. I think Sam and Mamba are teaming with the other champion and Ash's partner (along with the superhero) is still a mystery.

Overall Rating: C+. Yeah I know there was only one match on the show but the key thing here was the addition of the storylines. The match had a story and there was a story setting up the match next time (as confusing as it was). I know they're not the most interesting stories in the world but it's better than "here's a tournament match". I still don't know the characters well enough but even the simplest stories are a step up.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – December 13, 2015: The Most Important Thing

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Episode 5

Date: December 13, 2015

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentators: Eddie Strong, Cam Ferguson

This is the first season finale, meaning the finals of the MKW Championship tournament. The show started really slowly but it's picked up a bit in the last few shows. I still wouldn't really call it good but given how different this is, you can only ask so much. It's going to help

to get to some different stories aside from the tournament, which is the case in any wrestling company. Let's get to it.

We open with a much needed recap of the tournament as it's been about two months since the last episode went up.

CWE Title: The Slam vs. Black Mamba

Slam is defending and is a much bigger deal than most of the people in the tournament, though I'm still not sure what the CWE is. Mamba jumps Slam from behind to start and gets two off a quick clothesline. Something like an AA into an armbar puts Mamba down as Slam continues to be one of the most polished guys in the promotion.

A quick consultation with bodyguard Da Li Sam doesn't really work as Mamba walks into a Side Effect for two with Sam breaking up the count. For some reason that's not a DQ and neither is Sam CHOKING THE REFEREE. Dude even ECW would have thrown this out already. Mamba sprays something in Slam's eyes to take over before grabbing a DDT for two. Slam pops back up (without selling the eyes) and grabs another AA for two more.

The announcers debate whether a knee drop is legal or not (huh?) as Mamba heads outside again. This time it's the much bigger Sam getting in, which could be a bit more interesting. Slam beats up Sam and suddenly I feel like I'm in a Dr. Seuss book. Mamba comes back in and rakes the eyes (this referee is worthless) to set up a Scorpion Death Drop for two. That's about it though as Slam pops up (again) and grabs a suplex into a cutter (kind of like a TKO) to retain.

Rating: D. This didn't do it for me. The idea of Mamba having to cheat to stand a chance against Slam was fine but they probably should have just done Slam vs. Sam (egads with the rhyming) here. Mamba really doesn't have a character other than he's a guy with a bodyguard and that's not really enough to get me into a big showdown.

Also Slam not selling ANYTHING got old in a hurry. I get that he's a Goldberg style character, but even Goldberg would go down if someone blinded him. This had the structure of something good but needed a lot more thought and a better heel. Oh and the referee sucked. Like really

sucked. At least have him get distracted or bumped or something.

Da Li Sam introduces the replacement opponent for Dalton Bragg in the tournament final: Voodoo, a guy in a red mask. Well that's rather simple.

MKW Title: Dalton Bragg vs. Voodoo

The title is vacant coming in and Bragg is pretty easily the crowd favorite. Voodoo keeps saying he's got this. We hit the stall button and as usual, Bragg comes off as the most experienced guy in the company as he tries to get the crowd to boo the cowardly heel. We get the opening bell and Voodoo wants to shake Bragg's injured left arm (Which sends us into a flashback of Len Bai injuring Bragg's arm earlier in the tournament. You don't often see flashbacks on wrestling shows so points for something new, though shouldn't commentary be pointing that out?).

As expected, Voodoo cranks on the arm as commentary finally kicks back in, ranting about how Voodoo has been thrown out of every Chinese promotion. You would think that could have been set up before the match. Now they start talking about various things Voodoo pulled in other promotions. Naturally they don't go into specifics because I highly doubt these things ever happened and that's the best sign I've seen yet from these guys. Wrestling promotions don't seem to get that THEY CAN MAKE STUFF UP. Do that more often.

Bragg comes back with some cross bodies for two before crotching Voodoo on top. Everyone heads to the floor and Bragg gets caught by Sam, allowing Voodoo to get in a kick to the arm. Voodoo stays on the arm and tries to get the fans to cry. Nice touch. Back in and we hit the armbar, followed by some good old fashioned cheating from Sam.

Bragg gets his boots up in the corner but runs into a DDT on the arm to keep Voodoo in control. There's a hammerlock slam to stay on the arm, only to have Bragg nip up and catch Voodoo with an enziguri on top. The high spot of the match is a superplex to put both guys down again. They trade kicks to the arm with neither guy getting the advantage in another sequence that doesn't make a ton of sense.

Commentary is gone for some reason as Bragg nails a spin kick to the head

for two but Sam offers more distraction, allowing Voodoo to get in a good looking wheelbarrow faceplant for two of his own. Since he doesn't seem to have a finisher, Voodoo loads up a chain but hits Sam by mistake, allowing Bragg to come back with a springboard Codebreaker for the pin and the title.

Rating: C. Definitely a better match with the arm work, though it kind of disappeared halfway through. Voodoo was much better than Mamba as he actually did something, though again you can see that Bragg is the most experienced guy around here. This probably needed to be two minutes shorter and Voodoo needs a finisher, but the groundwork was much stronger here and it made for a better match. It's also rather surprising that they went with an American champion and actually pushed him as a face, but I'd rather do that than go with an inaugural heel champion.

Bragg gets the title and the credits roll.

Wait we're not done as we get a teaser for season two. The Slam comes out for a staredown with Bragg, presumably making him the first challenger. That's the smartest thing they could do right now.

Overall Rating: D+. This show was watchable but it's still needing a lot of work. Focusing on Bragg and the Slam is the best thing they could do, but at the same time the rest of their roster really needs the most help. The good thing here though is they have a champion and now they can move on to some other stuff which could do wonders (well ok maybe just some good) for the promotion as a whole. It's a nice effort but the glaring holes are still around.

That's it for season one and I'm really not sure what to think so far. Above all else, it's clear that there isn't a lot of experience on the roster. If there's one thing this company needs more than anything, it's coaching. It really feels like these guys have been given very little direction aside from the bare bones of "you're good, you're bad and you win." Off the top of my head, aside from Selfie King, I can't think of anyone on the roster who has a gimmick. You don't need anything mind blowing, but there's really nothing separating most of the characters.

This is where promos could help, even if they're translated to English.

Just tell us something about each person and give me a reason (as moderate as it might be) to be interested in them. On the fourth episode, Ash had a promo about how he was mad about being cheated out of the tournament and wanted a match for revenge. That told me everything I needed to know about the next match and gave me a reason to care about the story. Do more of that and explain who these people are a little more (commentary can do a lot of the heavy lifting there) and things will get a lot better in a hurry.

Also, get these guys on some weights. Save for Sam, everyone looks like they weigh about 150lbs. I know there's a limited talent pool to pick from, but there almost has to be some people with better physiques to pick from. It gets distracting at times as it feels like I could take some of these guys out.

Overall though, this really does feel like the bare bones of a promotion. Now that being said, there was a story being told and I could pick up on it more often than not which is the most important thing a wrestling promotion can do. There's A LOT of stuff that needs to be improved on but this could have been a disaster and wound up being watchable most of the time. Keep the shows short and give us some more stories/characters and things will get better.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – September 30, 2015: Short And Short

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Episode 3

Date: September 30, 2015

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Eddie Strong

This show is kind of growing on me. I'm digging what they're going for with the really short TV shows and simple booking. I could go for some stories and better wrestling but that's a universal issue in wrestling, even in China. We're on to the semi-finals tonight and it should be easier now that I have an idea who some of these people are. Let's get to it.

These shows are getting even shorter as this is under fifteen minutes long.

The Slam vs. King Michael

This is incorrectly billed as a tournament match. Michael is a big fat guy and Slam reminds me of Gillberg. He even has similar music to Goldberg. Slam pounds away like he's a guy twice his size and drops Michael with some forearms to the chest. A leglock sends Michael to the ropes but he clotheslines Slam down and smiles into the camera.

The required fat man splash gets two on Slam and a fat man shoulder drops him again. Michael's chokebomb is good for two and the argument with the referee allows Slam to come back with a string of forearms, followed by a springboard clothesline for two. Something like a belly to back slam and a big stomp is enough to put the King away.

Rating: C-. This was way better than it had any right to be with Slam looking like a combination of Taz and Goldberg as he fought like a guy 100lbs heavier than he actually is. Michael was your standard fat man who

couldn't do much aside from basic power moves but Slam more than made up for it. I could go for more than big forearms but that might come against someone who can give him more back.

MKW Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Selfie King vs. Black Mamba

Da Li Sam is with Mamba again in a partnership that hasn't been explained. Mamba isn't interested in a picture to start so he loses a test of strength instead. So apparently King is really strong. I mean, he's in good shape but it's hardly great. Mamba claims his shoes are messing up and the distraction lets Sam come in with a powerbomb for the pin to advance.

Mamba and Sam take a picture over King's unconscious body. Not bad.

Wait we're not done as the promoter comes up and points out the shenanigans, meaning Mamba is disqualified. I'm not a fan of that sort of an ending and it feels like they went this way for a shortcut instead of a full on match. Even a short one would have been fine and it would have padded the show out a bit.

Roll credits.

Overall Rating: C-. This didn't do it for me as well as the previous show but to be fair a show can only be so bad in fifteen minutes. The Slam was definitely the highlight of the show and it's a good idea to take some of the focus off the tournament for a change. Good enough show here but it's a step down from last time.

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