

Middle Kingdom Wrestling – February 17, 2017: Big Sam and Others

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: February 17, 2017

Location: Pattaya Boxing Stadium, Pattaya, Chon Buri, Thailand

Commentator: Al Leung

We're going to wrap up this very abbreviated season and hopefully head back to China where things are a bit better. The first show was a pretty mixed bag with one horrible match and one that was quite entertaining so it's hard to guess what's coming this time around. Let's get to it.

Same opening sequence as last time, which isn't the worst thing in the world given some of the eye candy in there.

We hear more of Dalton Bragg's conversation. It's true that he can't wrestle but he's found a replacement named Hayden Pearce, who is something called the Kingdom Wrestling Federation (no idea what/where that is) Champion. Tonight, he'll defend against the Slam, though the graphic lists Pearce as Hayden Zenith. That's the kind of thing that needs to be tightened up as I'm not even two minutes into the show and it's already an issue.

Black Mamba/Big Sam vs. Maxim Risky/Malkeet Brawler

Maxim and Brawler are from India and one of them charges to the ring early, earning a good looking powerbomb from Sam. A boot to the chest drops Brawler but it's Risky and Mamba starting things off as we hear the second bell. The commentator says this is in China, which doesn't quite work after the whole point of this show is being in Thailand.

A suplex gets two on Mamba and Sam comes in....for some jumping jacks of course. Well you can't do those on the apron. Sam comes in again for a regular save before distracting the referee so Mamba can choke. That second one threw the idea off a bit and it would have been a lot better if he had said it was a cramp or he was stretching or something like that. If you do it before and after but not in the

middle, it weakens what you did in the first place (which was good). Back to Sam for a clothesline on Brawler and what looks like a Sid Vicious pose. A gorilla press drop keeps showing off the power (smart) and it's off to a camel clutch. Brawler makes the ropes so it's another slam into a one finger cover. Mamba comes in again and plays Bret on something like a top rope Hart Attack but the referee is putting Sam out of the ring instead of counting. What would Danny Davis think of something like that?

Brawler gets in a TKO (love that move) and it's a double tag to Sam and Risky. Sam takes a DDT and Risky gets in some really, really bad looking right hands in the corner. Follow through with those things. Brawler hits a running Fameasser (called XYZ) on Mamba and a slam on Sam in a fairly impressive power display.

A double suplex is another power display and Risky gets two off a superkick. I'm not sure how wise is it to have your monster getting beaten up and thrown around like this. Mamba sneaks in a low blow (second of the match but the first one meant and changed nothing) and Sam grabs a chokeslam on Risky. Mamba adds a frog splash for the pin at 10:39.

Rating: D+. There's a LOT to talk about in this one. This is the best example I can think of to show how important psychology and match layout are to making something a success. Let's look at Sam. He has the most unique look in this promotion (much bigger and Caucasian instead of the mostly Asian roster) and in this match he was acting like the opponents were beneath him (the one finger pin and various times where he acted like he didn't even need to try). That's playing to his character and very good. Sam is different and he should act like he is.

His move set made sense too. It was a lot of power stuff like the powerbomb, gorilla press and chokeslam. Back at Wrestlemania XIII, Shawn Michaels said there was no reason for Sid Vicious to deviate from his power game because the power was going to take him wherever he needed to go. That makes a lot of sense for someone like Sid/Sam as their offense is going to be more devastating due to their power so it should be the majority of what they do.

That brings us to the rest of the match, which had some issues. As I mentioned, Mamba hit two low blows. The first one just slowed his opponent down for a bit and then it was right back to where they

were going before. Something like a low blow should be a match changer, not something on the same level as a clothesline or a few right hands. If you're going to do those big spots, use them sparingly. Otherwise they're just a regular move and people won't care when they're used in important spots. If you need proof, look at WWE's main event style of spamming finishers.

There were good things in the match but there's also a lot that needs to be tightened up. I didn't really feel a flow to the match. One team was in control, then the other was in control, then the heels won. The ending felt like it came out of nowhere and the match just ended instead of building up to something. I'd also like to know a bit more about Risky and Brawler. All I know is they're "stars in India". How long have they been wrestling? Should I cheer for them? How long have they been teaming? Stuff like that can go a long way.

A big guy covered in tattoos whose name sounded like Humungous says he's bringing underground wrestling to China.

Eurasian Dragon vs. Humungous

Dragon is the Singapore Champion and Humungous wants to make it a title shot. The request is accepted and we're ready to go. This was another example of the disappearing and reappearing subtitles.

Singapore Title: Eurasian Dragon vs. Humungous

Dragon is defending and gets driven into the corner as we hear about Humungous wrestling around the world. A few forearms sends Humungous into the ropes like a cowardly heel and he flips Dragon off after teasing a handshake. Dragon misses a Flip Flop and Fly but grabs La Majistral for the pin to retain at 2:28.

Humungous hits him from behind and says he wants a rematch. I'm not sure if debuting someone and having them job immediately is a good idea but Humungous had a good look.

KWF Title: Hayden Zenith vs. The Slam

Slam is challenging and his CWE Title isn't on the line. One side note here: all of the titles that I've seen around here look really good. There are a lot of ugly belts in wrestling but these are all very nice. Granted part of that might be due to the fact that the KWF Title is a WWF Attitude Era World Title replica. Eh if you're going to use a replica, use one of the best looking of all time.

They start fast (a rarity around here) with Slam sweeping the leg but stopping to pose, allowing Zenith to pull him off the ropes and hammer away. Some loud chops set up a hard Saito suplex on Slam and we get a cocky cover. A hard kick to Slam's back sends some sweat flying (always a good visual) and we hit an octopus hold. Zenith switches over to a few more submission attempts as this is already by far and away the most polished match of the two shows.

Slam fights up but eats a pair of superkicks (giving us a Superkick Party reference) and they head out to the ramp. Some rather hard forearms knock Hayden back in and Slam's top rope forearm gets...no cover. Instead Zenith slips out of a Jackhammer and we get a ref bump. Cue Bragg to check on the referee as Slam hits a suplex into a cutter (not a Jackhammer as the announcer puts it). It's a ruse though and Bragg hits Slam in the head with the crutch so Zenith can retain at 8:33.

Rating: C+. This was the first time I really felt like I got an angle this promotion has tried to run. It's a very simple idea and I got the point without having to figure anything out. Zenith and Slam were some of the more polished guys and Bragg as the champion who is scared of Slam is a good enough story. Throw in Bragg having a #1 contender in Selfie King and you have the makings for something interesting. I haven't felt that around here too often and it's very nice change of pace.

Bragg beats on Slam with the crutch to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Much like the tag, there's good and bad on here. Let's get to the good first: this felt like a more complete show. There were three matches here and each one felt like it served a purpose. The tag match was good and made Sam look like a threat to someone down the line. Dragon vs. Humungous looks to be the start of a feud and Humungous has some charisma to him. Finally you have the main event which felt like a good angle. I'm pleased here and while the show had some quality issues, it had a good structure, which might be more important.

On the other hand, the promotion is still lacking in character development. Let's take a look at the two shows combined. Other than having Sam in his corner, what separates Ash, Jason and Black Mamba? They have a similar look and wrestle a similar style. I barely know anything about them and they really lose me when I'm trying to

remember which is which.

Finally, the offenses need to be varied up a bit. In the first three matches of these two shows, three people used a frog splash. There are a ton of moves to use from the top and just because a frog splash is cool, you can use something else. Drop an elbow, drop a knee, do a spinning splash. Just don't do the same thing that so many people have done. It was annoying in the Cruiserweight Classic and it's the same here.

I liked enough of the show and this episode showed some promise but they need to find a way to keep that momentum going. Maybe it was just a lucky night with an angle to help tie things together at the end but they need to build on that instead of having a bunch of one off shows before advancing the story. Have people cut a thirty second promo (throw in subtitles if necessary) and keep things moving. It'll keep people coming back and that's the key at this point.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – September 18, 2016 (Season

2 Finale): A Different Kind of Upgrade

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: September 18, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Eddie Strong

It's the season finale with MKW Champion Dalton Bragg defending against the huge King Michael. This has been a rather different season as there hasn't been much of a focus aside from the stuff over the title near the beginning. I'm still liking it well enough though and there's a story to get us here, which is the most important thing. Let's get to it.

M.A. vs. King of Man

This is a bonus match and a Kung Fu Showcase. No story or anything here and I don't know who either of them are but that's standard around here. They trade kicks and strikes to start of course with King (there probably shouldn't be two Kings on the same show) getting the better of it until he gets thrown off the top. I don't remember that in the full two Kung Fu movies I've seen.

A nice looking headscissors sends M.A. flying and a Vader Bomb elbow gets one. M.A. comes back with some running clotheslines in the corner as Strong (dang it I miss Ferguson) tells us that M.A. is the heel. See, that's something so easy that a simple statement clears up. King gets caught in a hard chokeslam for two but he comes right back with a basement dropkick for two of his own.

We hit a dragon sleeper on M.A. as Strong tells us about the horrible weather in China at the moment. A missed moonsault from King sends both guys outside and M.A. hits a Triad Kick (Mafia Kick) for two. M.A. gets a bit more creative with a chokeslam spinebuster for yet another two, only to have King throw him down and hit a spinning top rope splash for the pin.

Rating: C+. I'm not sure where the Kung Fu part came in but this was another nice match with some time to make it work. Of course it's not exactly up to par with most stuff you'll see but it was still an entertaining match with one guy as the heel and the other as the

face. A story would have been nice but at least we had something entertaining for the first half of the show.

Quick recap of King Michael vs. Dalton Bragg. Michael attacked Bragg earlier in the season and a match was made. Simple, yet effective.

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Title: Dalton Bragg vs. King Michael

Bragg is defending and this is anything goes. This is kind of an odd visual as Michael is huge and Bragg is a stick but he's still taller than Michael. I also don't buy for a second that Michael is 500lbs as he looks closer to 350. You can gimmick the weights but there's a limit. Bragg gets shouldered down and splashed for two so it's time for weapons.

Michael sets up a piece of wood over some boxes but has to shrug off some clotheslines before easily blocking a suplex. Instead it's a chokebomb to put Bragg....onto the wood, which just kind of flew to the side instead of breaking. A World's Strongest Slam sets up some kendo stick shots but Bragg takes it away and pounds on Michael.

We hear about Bragg's deathmatch background (which was mentioned in season one) as Michael takes it outside where some of his cronies get in a few shots to Bragg's back. Another table is set up but Dalton gets in a few more kicks to stagger Michael in front of the table....for a very, VERY long time.....until a jumping kick knocks Michael onto the table (again, not through it) to retain the title.

Rating: C. This is a tricky one as the story was there but there's only so much you can do when Michael is a one dimensional monster and Bragg MIGHT weigh 140lbs if you put a half dozen bricks in his pockets. The match was watchable enough but I really could have gone with another segment between them or some promos about why these two wanted to fight.

Post match the Slam comes out for a staredown. Bragg punches him in the jaw and a really bad looking slugout wraps things up.

We get a graphic for an upcoming wrestling festival featuring the MKW roster and some other wrestlers, including the Powers of Pain. Well that's a bit of an upgrade.

Overall Rating: C+. For a stand alone show, this was fun enough but not so much as a season finale. For the last show we'll be seeing from these guys for months, your longest match probably shouldn't be between two newcomers without much of a story. That's where MKW

starts to fall apart for me: they rarely have more than one or two stories going on at a time and that gives a show like this a hard time. It's still an easy sit through and that's important.

Overall season two was....odd. They set up the title match to start things off but then it was a few one off matches before we got to the six man (which is still confusing) and the season finale. It was cool to see the international talent but they all feel out of left field and therefore like filler instead of something out of MKW. I still liked it (partially due to the length of the shows and some better details in the stories we had) but it would have been nice to have some better character development and a reason to care about these people. I'm not sure I'd call it an upgrade but it's definitely different.

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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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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 – October 12, 2015: American Know-How

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Episode 4

Date: October 12, 2015

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Eddie Strong, Cam Ferguson

Back to the east again with the latest offering from a company that

I like for reasons I can't put my finger on. We're moving forward in the tournament but it's been a long time and I might not remember everyone involved. Hopefully they have a decent recap, along with a better announcer. Let's get to it.

The opening sequence has changed a bit but the recap is still the same. They still need to get a better graphic though.

We open with a recap of Black Mamba being ejected from the tournament for cheating and getting to face the Slam as a result. That right there is all I needed for a recap so far as it took less than a minute and summed up the big story. Well done.

Ash isn't pleased with being cheated out of the tournament by Black Mamba and Da Li Sam. After implying that Sam is a prostitute for fat women, he talks about ripping the stitches out of his head with chopsticks. I think that deserves a HE'S HARDCORE chant. He's back earlier than the doctors recommended and he wants the Slam's top student Jason. Therefore, Jason needs to go tell Slam that he's tired of taking out the trash and buying toilet paper and wants to face Ash instead. The delivery wasn't the best but he definitely had some charisma to him and was comfortable in front of a camera.

Ash vs. Jason

This is billed as a special challenge match. Ash has an American flag on his jacket so I'm guessing he's the heel here. He comes out with a good looking woman so he can't be all bad. We have a new commentator named Cam Ferguson who apparently has a Masters in Confucianism and is clearly a heel.

Jason hides in the corner to start as Eddie recaps the story so far in that annoying voice of his. A dropkick gets two on Jason and Ash messes with the hair. Ferguson says that's typical American bullying but Eddie says he's supposed to be hitting him in a wrestling match. Ferguson: "So it's ok to kick him in the stomach?" A quick belly to belly puts Ash down and Ferguson accuses Ash of hitting low.

We hit a chinlock from Jason (Or a rear naked chin hold according to Eddie. That sounds like the Matt Striker school of "here's a WAY

more complicated name than you need.") as Ferguson accuses the referee of being a traitor to the Communist Party. Ash comes back with some forearm and a middle rope kick to the chest (think RVD) for two, followed by a Boston crab for the win.

Rating: C. You can really tell which people in this promotion have the ring experience. Ash isn't great but he clearly has a much better idea of what he's doing. There was even a little story here and it helped the match move on a lot. Also they're starting to go longer and I'm not bored so things are definitely improving.

MKW Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Dalton Bragg vs. Len Bai

Bragg has comically skinny arms. Bai doesn't like Dalton taking his time on the floor and dives over the top, only to crash down in front of him. It doesn't really matter as the ring is only about three feet above the ground but it was still quite the crash. Bragg gets in a cheap shot from behind to take over and we get a ridiculously slow motion Irish whip into a monkey flip to Bai.

Back up and they trade chops (with Bai's lacking any follow through) until Bragg asks a little girl to rub his hand to make him stronger. Bragg's cross body is countered into a backbreaker for two and Strong is somehow still on my nerves. After Bai hasn't done anything flashy all match, he slaps on Cattle Mutilation of all things. Where did he learn that? A fisherman's buster gets two on Bragg but he pops up and hits a nice middle rope Codebreaker to advance to the finals.

Rating: C-. Not the best match here but you can see that Bai is still new out there. Bragg isn't anything worth watching either though he definitely has more experience and looked more comfortable. The Cattle Mutilation and Codebreaker looked good and the right guy won though so it's not the worst in the world.

Post match Bai breaks Bragg's arm in a surprisingly big heel move.

After the credits, Black Mamba and Da Lip Sam say they're not worried about the Slam. Bai promises to take care of the tournament final too.

Overall Rating: C-. The tournament is coming to a close as we're wrapping up the first season but this wasn't their strongest show. You can clearly see the difference between the talent levels and it can be a bit tiring watching the people with next to no experience. The show is still watchable at less than half an hour but I'm hoping it picks up a bit in the final.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – September 17, 2015: In Any Language

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Episode 2

Date: September 17, 2015

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Eddie Strong

This show wasn't terrible the first time I looked at it and maybe the second show is going to be better. If nothing else I'm kind of interested in seeing which of the two matches from the first show is the more accurate indicator of what this promotion is about. Maybe the commentator won't be as annoying this time either. Let's get to it.

I'm not sure what the deal is with the dates but I'm going with when they're posted on Youtube.

The intro is the same last week, down to the same video packages and captions.

The Slam (CWE Champion. For the first time it's confirmed that CWE and MKW are different things) is in the ring and wants to talk to the MKW GM about why he isn't in the title tournament. The unnamed GM isn't sure what to say so Slam demands a match against a big man in the future, which is granted. So we have another angle.

MKW Title Tournament First Round: Jason vs. Dalton Bragg

Bragg's entrance is in fast motion. I'm digging the way they're doing things differently like that as it's not something you see in most promotions. Before the match we get a video on American Dalton Bragg, who brags about his success in America. I'm more interested in his South Park tattoos. He knows he's better than everyone in the tournament, including the Slam. That's still kind of confusing and they need to clear it up. Maybe with a bracket or something.

The match is joined in progress with Bragg kicking Jason in the head for two. A Codebreaker gets the same as we're told that Jason is Slam's student. Jason comes back with a PerfectPlex and a Boston crab but Dalton rolls through for two. Bragg can't get Jason up for what looked like a powerbomb and drops him into something like a Dominator instead for the pin. Too short to rate but Bragg is more polished and has a better presence than anyone else so far.

This show is already better than the first one and we're not even half done.

MKW Title Tournament First Round: Ash vs. Black Mamba

Kobe Bryant is in this tournament? Ash has an American flag on the back of his vest but there are no videos this time. Instead Mamba grabs the mic and says he knows he's underrated but he has a secret plan. He brings out someone named Da Li Sam as a coach and I guess we're supposed to know who that is. Mamba is another of Slam's students and it seems that a lot of these people wrestle in CWE. Ash drops Mamba but Sam pulls his.....whatever Mamba is to him to the floor for a conference.

Back in and Da Li trips Ash up but Ash runs Mamba over anyway. We get a chase on the floor and Mamba finally takes over with an ax handle on the way back in. A lot of choking from both Mamba and Sam sets up an ST0 (not STF commentator) for two on Ash. Mamba grabs a

camel clutch (called a signature move) but Ash fights back with a Stinger Splash and backbreaker but Sam shoves Ash into the referee. The brawl is on and the much bigger Sam (his head is over the top rope while he's standing on the floor) sends Ash into the post for a long countout.

Rating: C. The wrestling wasn't great but there was a far more important key here: I got the idea they were trying to present even though I have no idea who these people are and know nothing about them. It's a sign of better storytelling and that's the most important thing in wrestling. You really should be able to tell what's going on no matter what and they covered that here.

The credits and a preview for next week take us out.

Overall Rating: B. Again on the sliding scale but this was WAY better than last week. There's definitely better wrestling here with the stories being more well rounded and the ideas being easier to understand. I'll keep watching this as it's only twenty minutes and I can go for a change of pace to the simple stories and basic booking. Much better show this week though the commentator is still annoying.

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