

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 – June 29, 2016: Now I

Understand The Opening

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: June 29, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Cam Ferguson, Eddie Strong

This is a big show as it's finally time to see the six man tag that has been in the opening video all season long. They've treated this as a major match with a story behind it and all that jazz so maybe it's going to feel like a bigger deal than most of what they've done so far this season. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with a recap of the six man tag which still isn't really clear. I'm not even sure who all these people are and who they're partnering with but hopefully we get a bit better explanation as we go.

The video ends with the teams listed together and their names next to their pictures. It really is that easy and that actually helps a lot.

Andruew Tang/Big Sam/Black Mamba vs. Ash Silva/Eurasian Dragon/Jason Wong

Jason is a mystery partner and a fairly big deal. It's a brawl to start at the bell as the bad guys (I think? I honestly have almost no idea what's going on here other than Sam, who works for Mamba, cost Silva a match in the title tournament last season) attack at the handshake, which is the first clip shown on every episode. Tang, the Singapore Champion, starts off with Ash and hits a nice dropkick. A headlock keeps Ash in trouble with Tang pulling the hair. Ok so they're the heels.

Tang's bulldog is countered into something resembling a belly to back suplex and it's off to Dragon, who has apparently been feuding with Tang for years now. Tang screams about being in a wristlock and keeps screaming after Dragon lets go. So wait did the hold hurt or

not? Now it's off to a test of strength with Tong kicking him in the ribs like a villain should, only to have it turn into a chop off. A tornado DDT plants Dragon as it would be nice to see the other three people actually wrestling.

Tang loads up a suplex (Tong: "SUPLEX CITY!") but Dragon is a bit too big to be pulled over. It's off to Mamba who walks right into a hiptoss. Jason comes in for a bad looking Paisan Elbow as the announcers talk about Ash and Jason developing respect for each other, thereby explaining their partnership. That should have been mentioned earlier but it's much better than not mentioning it at all.

Jason gets so sick of getting stomped that he takes off his headgear to make things serious. Sam comes in for the first time and drops Jason with a gorilla press. You can hear Ferguson drooling over Sam and the size difference really does show here. Ash escapes a powerbomb attempt and knocks Sam down with a palm strike, followed by a high cross body for two. Sam blasts him with a clothesline (needed more follow thru) before taking Ash into the corner for some double chops.

Sam's running clothesline hits Mamba by mistake though but he makes up for it by launching Ash over the top. Unfortunately that means we have to hear about how amazing instant replay is again. Back in and a Tombstone plants Ash and it's off to Jason for a spinning side slam on Mamba. Tang kicks Jason in the back though and the heels take over again. A suplex earns a ten (on paper even) from Sam, who then comes in and does a slightly less impressive one. A top rope Hart Attack plants Jason but he easily gets the tag off to Ash.

Everything breaks down and the Dragon scores with a pop up powerbomb on Mamba. Jason picks Sam up for an AA, only to get caught in a Shell Shock from Tang. A belt shot knocks Mamba down by mistake and Mamba gets in a superkick, meaning I have to hear SUPERKICK because the Bullet Club nonsense is in China now. Ash drops a top rope splash on Mamba and, after two replays, we actually get to see the pin.

Rating: B-. Again that's on a very sliding scale but it was entertaining enough. They had the story working well enough and explained why I'm supposed to care about these people fighting. It also helps that the wrestling was decent by MKW standards and they kept things moving. I'd like to see Sam be more of a power guy instead of a wrestler who happens to be big.

Take the suplex spot for instance. Sam praised a guy for doing a suplex and then does basically the same move. That doesn't really make Sam look any more dominant, but rather makes him just look taller than the first person to do a suplex. He's the biggest standout based on looks along and Ferguson built him up very well but I didn't quite see it in the ring.

Overall Rating: B-. I'm starting to have more fun watching this show and having a big match like this build up for several months until the payoff was a good sign. I could still go for seeing the stories be tighter though as this match has been built up for a good while but then really just popped back onto the radar in the last few weeks. At least the match was good though, which is the most important thing they can do. It's still a fun little show and next time's season finale continues the other story so all is well.

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