

Final Battle 2024: It's Finally Over

Final Battle 2024

Date: December 20, 2024

Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Caprice Coleman

It's the biggest show of the year and we have a double main event. In this case, the actual main event will be a rematch from last year as Athena defends the Women's Title against Billie Starkz. The other half of the main event will see Matt Cardona challenging Chris Jericho for the World Title. Let's get to it.

Zero Hour: Dark Order vs. Grizzled Young Veterans

Evil Uno is here with the Order as Reynolds and Drake start things off. They both try armdrags and dropkicks to no avail so it's a four way staredown to start. Gibson comes in and yells a lot before being taken into the corner so Silver can kick away at the chest. The Veterans start taking over by Silver's leg though, with Gibson grabbing a half crab. Drake cranks on the leg as well and kicks him in the knee before they go up top.

Silver managers a super hurricanrana for a breather and it's Reynolds coming in to clean house. Everything breaks down and a spear/brainbuster combination drops Drake on the floor. Back in and Gibson charges into a boot in the corner but is fine enough to hold Reynolds up for a Doomsday Device. Uno whips out the papers though and a shot to the head lets the Order hit their sequence for two on Drake. Silver's knee gives out again though and a high/low finishes Silver at 11:28.

Rating: C+. This was a nice choice for an opener with a feud that saw the villains being mad at the Order and wanting to

beat them. That's all you need for a match like this and the people involved did the rest. I'll call this one a nice little result, as it didn't try to do anything elaborate but made it work at a simple level.

Zero Hour: Harley Cameron vs. Hanako

This is Hanako's debut and she's Mina Shirakawa's rather tall stable mate. Hanako shoves her down to start and hits a shoulder to knock Cameron into the ropes. Cameron loses a battle over a suplex and a pair of big boots puts her on the floor. A missed charge lets Cameron send her into the steps though and some kicks to the ribs keep Hanako in trouble.

Back up and Hanako ties her in the Tree of Woe but Cameron gets the knee out. A Shining Wizard gives Cameron two and a rather spinning headscissors takes Hanako down again. Hanako is right back with a backbreaker though and a torture rack spun into a faceplant finishes Cameron at 7:21.

Rating: C. I'm sure this is part of the build towards Wrestle Dynasty and Stardom (Hanako's home promotion) has to get a win to hype up the show, but egads man. Cameron has gone from just another annoying person on the roster to someone the fans have gotten behind. There was no story to this match and anyone could have put Hanako over here. Why have Cameron, who the fans are getting behind, lose when you have so many other options for the spot? If Hanako just has to beat someone here, don't have it be someone who is getting themselves over through pure talent and willpower.

Zero Hour: Infantry vs. Undisputed Kingdom

Trish Adora and Shane Taylor are here with the Infantry. The Infantry jump them before the bell and Bravo suplexes Taven to get things going. Taven is back up with a big dive to the floor and they get back inside for a middle rope dropkick to Bravo. Dean sweeps the leg though and hits a Stunner off the apron as Taven is in trouble again. Some corner forearms and a

wind up DDT drop Taven for two but he grabs a DDT of his own.

The referee doesn't see the tag to Bennett though, meaning the beating has to continue. That's broken up and Bennett comes in, with a Death Valley river sending Bravo onto Dean for two. An assisted swinging slam gets the same on Bennett, who quickly gets back to Taven for the house cleaning. Everything breaks down and Just The Tip into Bennett's piledriver gets two. Adora's cheap shot sets up Boot Camp for two but Taven pulls Bravo to the floor. Rockstar Supernova finishes Dean at 9:49.

Rating: C. Another nice match here with something that would have fit in just fine on the weekly show and probably didn't need to be added to this crowded card. The Undisputed Kingdom are already involved with the Adam Cole/MJF story so having them win here was the only way to go. The Infantry are the current midcard villains tag team and that isn't going to be enough to overcome bigger stars like the Kingdom.

Zero Hour: LeeJ vs. Gates Of Agony

Johnson and Kaun start things off and they trade leapfrogs until Johnson hits a dropkick. Nduka adds a swinging side slam but Johnson comes back in and gets crotched on top. Liona comes in to drop an elbow for two but Johnson scores with a pop up dropkick. We get the big Liona vs. Nduka forearm exchange before they trade hard clotheslines.

Nduka gets sent into the corner for running hips/knees to the face but Johnson makes the save. Liona and Nduka both hit Pounces before Liona Samoan drops Nduka. A running knee sends Nduka into the steps, leaving Johnson to neckbreaker Kaun. Johnson's dive off the apron is cut off and Open The Gates gets...two. Another Open The Gates finishes Johnson at 10:24.

Rating: C+. So LeeJ is built up as an interesting team for a few weeks, all to lose to the Gates Of Agony? That's certainly a choice, but the team only felt like a way to get Nduka's

feet wet. That being said, it doesn't seem like Nduka is ready for such a push on his own as he hasn't done much other than have some squash matches. Weird ending here, but it's not like it's going to matter for the title picture anyway.

Post match respect is shown...and then LeeJ turns on them. As usual, a heel turn would have more impact if it didn't come after a clean loss.

And now, the show proper.

We open with a look at the show's history in New York City before looking at the show's double main event.

Atlantis Jr. vs. Mansoor

Mason Madden is here with Mansoor. They touch tips to start and we're ready to go. As commentary confirms that this is over things that are happening in CMLL, Mansoor takes him down and strikes a pose, setting up some armdrags. Atlantis is back with a snapmare before tying up the legs to take over. A leglock sends Mansoor over to the ropes and we pause for a pose from Madden. Mansoor takes over and hits a Falcon Arrow before going after the mask.

More posing in the corner allows Atlantis to come back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker, followed by another to make it worse. Madden offers a distraction though, allowing Mansoor to grab a northern lights superplex. A Death Valley Driver into the corner gives Mansoor two but Atlantis wheelbarrow suplexes him into another corner. Mansoor tries a springboard but gets cuttered out of the air for two. Madden tries to interfere...but Danhausen of all people comes out to cut him off. Mansoor accidentally dives onto Madden and then gets taken out by an Atlantis dive. The frog splash gives Atlantis the pin at 12:00.

Rating: C+. Nice enough match, but maybe give us a bit more about why these two are fighting? Other than something about

“this happened in CMLL”, we had no context for why these two are fighting. Show us what happened or have the talk about something, but give us a bit more than that, especially on a show as big as this one.

Post match Madden jumps Atlantis but gets cursed by Danhausen. A German suplex drops Madden and Danhausen pours teeth into his mouth.

Chris Jericho talks about how New York City is his city and gets a few details wrong. He’s ready to leave the Grand Apple as World Champion.

Katsuyori Shibata vs. Tommy Billington

This is Billington’s ROH debut and they have no notable history together. They fight over wrist control to start with Billington flipping his way to freedom. Billington reverses a headlock into a headscissors but Shibata starts working on the leg to take over. Back up and Billington sends him to the apron and hits a big running flip dive.

Shibata is right back on the leg and the figure four has Billington in trouble. That’s broken up with a rope break so Shibata grabs an STO. An armbar sends Billington to the ropes but he’s fine enough to elbow Shibata into a suplex. A springboard tornado DDT sends Shibata head first into the apron for a double down on the floor. Back in and Billington strikes away, only to get pulled into a sleeper for the tap at 9:50.

Rating: B-. What is there to say about a match where there is no backstory and one of the people is making his in-ring debut for the promotion? It’s another match that was fine in the ring but there is little reason to get interested in what they’re doing. They’re just having a match and while it was good enough, I’m expecting something a bit more intriguing at the biggest show of the year.

Respect is shown post match.

We recap QT Marshall vs. Jay Lethal. With Lethal returning to Ring Of Honor, Marshall wanted them to join forces. Lethal turned him down and a match was made, with Marshall bringing up a previous injury he had and seemingly blaming Lethal for what happened.

Jay Lethal vs. QT Marshall

...and they're both in Randy Savage cosplay, which had nothing to do with this story coming in. Aaron Solo and an unidentified woman are with Marshall while Sonjay Dutt and Karen Jarrett (in NWO Elizabeth gear) are with Lethal. We start fast with Lethal hitting the Savage neck snap over the top into a top rope ax handle. The rolling dropkick lets Lethal send Marshall outside, where he gets in a shot of his own.

A kiss to the unknown woman lets Lethal come back with a suicide dive but a Solo distraction cuts Lethal off. Marshall's tornado DDT gets two but Lethal fights up with some forearms. Marshall can't hit a Lethal Injection so Lethal gives him a pop up neckbreaker for two. Lethal goes after the leg and grabs the Figure Four so Solo tries to come in, earning himself a Figure Four from Dutt.

The Lethal Combination connects but Solo crotches Lethal on top. Cue Jeff Jarrett to guitar Solo and Hail To The King connects for two. The Lethal Injection is countered into the Cross Rhodes for two but Lethal kicks him in the head. A cutter hits Marshall, who is right back with his own Lethal Injection. Back up and Lethal small packages him for two, followed by a pair of Lethal Injections for the pin at 12:32.

Rating: B-. I have so many questions. This was all over the place but in a rather entertaining way, as they stopped trying to have this be anything but insanity and that worked. I have no idea why Marshall was doing a Savage impression or really

why Marshall was on this show in the first place, but it was by far the most entertaining thing on the show so far and I'll take that at this point.

By the way: we are just shy of two hours into this show and this is the first match that had anything resembling an important story (Grizzled Young Veterans vs. Dark Order and LeeJ vs. Gates Of Agony are not important). In the words of rock legend Lenny Haise, this is an opportune time to pick it up a little.

We recap Leyla Hirsch challenging Red Velvet for the Women's TV Title. Hirsch is getting the title match based on winning a match in July before she was injured and has won one match since (and lost a four way, also involving Velvet). Again: not much in the way of major builds so far.

Women's TV Title: Leyla Hirsch vs. Red Velvet

Velvet is defending and is rapped live to the ring. Hirsch grabs a headlock to start but gets rolled up for an early two. Back up and Hirsch works on the arm, which doesn't last long as Velvet is back with a headlock. Velvet starts in on Hirsch's previously injured arm and we pause to check on Hirsch. She's fine enough to be shoved into the corner, followed by a heck of a spear to give Velvet two. Hirsch starts going after Velvet's arm for a change, setting up a sunset German suplex (that was cool).

A spinning German suplex drops Velvet again, followed by a powerbomb into a top rope Lionsault for two. Velvet is back with a powerbomb of her own and a spinning kick to the head gets a near fall of her own. A right hand staggers Hirsch but she sends Velvet into the buckle for a breather. Velvet's shot to the face gets two so she grabs a turnbuckle (as in the big metal rod). That's taken away so she whips out a wrench and knocks Hirsch cold for the pin to retain at 11:52.

Rating: B-. I guess that was supposed to be some big heel turn

at the end but it came so out of nowhere that it didn't have much of an impact. Velvet has gotten better in recent months but there still isn't much that makes her stand out. Maybe the heel turn will help her, though she's going to need a bit more to really make it work.

Lee Moriarty has issued an open challenge for a Pure Title match because he wants the best challengers.

Pure Rules Title: Lee Moriarty vs. ???

Moriarty is defending against...Nigel McGuinness. Well that's a big one. Hold on though as Nigel wants this under Old School Pure Rules. Taylor says OLD is right but McGuinness isn't impressed and insults are traded. Moriarty wants the match so Nigel says we'll do it old school. Bobby Cruise lists off the rules...which are the same as the new school rules.

They take their time to start until Nigel goes for a waistlock, which makes Moriarty burn through his first rope break. Back up and Nigel claims a right hand from Moriarty, which counts as his first thrown punch. Taylor wants and gets a second referee out here as Nigel can't quite get a crossface. The London Dungeon has Moriarty in more trouble but he uses the rope again.

Moriarty pulls him into a stretch of his own, sending Nigel to the ropes. Nigel heads outside to yell at Taylor, who Moriarty accidentally takes out with a running knee. Back in and McGuinness strikes away and the Tower Of London connects for two. The London Dungeon is countered into a Border City Stretch and Nigel has to use his second rope break as well. Another Border City Stretch has Nigel using his final break but he's back up with the rebound lariat for two.

Nigel catches him on top with another Tower Of London, with Moriarty using his final rope break, meaning neither has any left. They uppercut it out until Moriarty backslides him for two. An exchange of rollups gets two each and Moriarty's

suplex Downward Spiral gets two more. Moriarty gets the Border City Stretch on again and uses the ropes for leverage to make Nigel tap at 17:04.

Rating: B. Having Nigel back was a nice surprise and it gave the fans a reason to believe that the title might change hands. The point of an open challenge like this is to put a big name out there and Nigel certainly fits the bill. That being said, I'm still not sure if we need the Pure Title out there on a regular basis, as it just doesn't feel like it matters most of the time. For now though, heck of a match with Nigel being able to do this kind of wrestling in his sleep.

Post match respect is shown and Moriarty lets Nigel have the ring.

We recap the Righteous challenging the Sons Of Texas for the Tag Team Titles. This has mainly been about Dustin Rhodes vs. Dutch over a cowbell that Dusty Rhodes once owned because Dusty saw something in Dutch, making it personal.

Tag Team Titles: Sons Of Texas vs. The Righteous

The Righteous are challenging in a double bullrope match, meaning both of them are bound together and you win with a pin or submission. The brawl starts on the floor (and before the tying) with Guevara hitting a big flip dive before the bell. They get inside with Dustin hitting the drop down uppercut and a double suplex dropping Dutch. Now they bother tying up and the bell actually rings. The champs take over to start and hit stereo Shattered Dreams.

That doesn't seem to have much of an impact as the Righteous fight up and it's time to head outside. Dustin chairs Dutch in the back before Sammy and Vincent collide for a double knockdown. Dutch comes back with a Boss Man Slam on the ramp and it's time for a barbed wire table. That takes too long and Dutch is knocked through the table but Vincent kicks Rhodes low. Orange Sunshine off the barricade drops Sammy and Vincent

pulls himself out of the rope.

Sammy has to save Dustin from being choked out and they head back outside with Vincent being rocked again. Sammy is unhooked as well and it's time to set up a regular table and a ladder. The Swanton only hits table though, leaving Dustin to beat up Vincent. Dutch's shot in the corner gives Vincent two so Dustin flips both of them off. Orange Sunshine gets two with Sammy making the save. Sammy and Vincent crash out to the floor and a Canadian Destroyer drops Dutch. The cowbell to the head pins Dutch to retain the titles at 15:34.

Rating: B. If you ignore the bull ropes being broken up part of the way through the match and the whole thing turning into a pretty run of the mill street fight, it worked well. The cowbell finishing Dutch was the logical ending after the story they have been telling too. That being said, I can't fathom that the Sons Of Texas are going to make it to the new year with the titles, as I have no idea how they have this much appeal.

TV Title: Komander vs. Willie Mack vs. Mark Davis vs. Blake Christian vs. AR Fox vs. Brian Cage

Cage is defending under elimination rules. Christian bails to the floor to start and pulls Komander with him, leaving Fox to hit a dive. Cage and Davis slug it out with Davis getting the better of things, including a running backsplash. Back in and Mack avoids Davis' swings, setting up a running boot to the face. Mack is sent outside and Fox hits a bunch of dives for a bunch of knockdowns.

Back in and Komander flips away from Fox before sending him outside for a big springboard corkscrew moonsault. Christian hits Cage with suicide dive and a spear on the apron hits Komander. Christian's big corkscrew dive takes out a few people but Cage gives him a neckbreaker back inside. A double German suplex sends Fox and Komander flying but Mack is back

in to clean house. Mack Samoan drops Komander and Fox at the same time (hip swivel included) and a standing moonsault gets two on Davis. A series of Stunners takes everyone down, only for Cage to hit a discus lariat to pin Mack at 9:32.

Fox comes back in to kick Cage in the face, followed by a running hanging DDT to Davis. Komander's running dive is cut off with a DDT on the apron, setting up Fox's imploding springboard flip dive. Back in and Fox's 450 gets two on Komander but Lo Mein Pain is countered into a super sitout powerbomb so Cage can pin Fox at 13:28.

Cage and Davis slug it out until Komander comes in with a super hurricanrana to Davis. An F5 drops Komander but Davis drops Cage with a clothesline. A piledriver gets rid of Cage at 16:39 to guarantee a new champion. Christian hits Davis low and rolls him up with trunks for the pin, leaving us with Christian vs. Komander for the title. Christian kicks Komander into the corner and a double stomp to the knees keeps him down. Komander is back with something like an abdominal stretch on the back but Christian shoves him out to the floor.

A 450 misses back inside though and Komander knocks him outside again. Komander's dive is cut off with a Spanish Fly for two but he's back up with a super poisonrana. The rope walk flip dive takes Christian out on the floor but he kicks the referee into the ropes to break up Cielito Lindo. Christian's swinging belly to back superplex gets two but it's a Canadian Destroyer into a 619 into Cielito Lindo to give Komander the pin and the title at 25:20.

Rating: B-. Oh boy where do I start here? First of all, it was a fun, action packed match, but DANG it went on for a long time. This is a match that could have had ten minutes cut off and not lost much but it just kept going with one long sequence after another. It had enough spots to keep me interested, but get on with it already.

Second, there's the Komander problem. While he has been fairly regularly featured around here and has had some success, you can only get so far with having someone who is little more than cannon fodder in AEW. Komander hasn't won a match yet in this year's Continental Classic (and very well may not) but he's only won two singles matches in AEW this year. That is going to need to change, or the ROH TV Champion is going to lose a lot going forward. That's not a good way to present any title and it shouldn't happen.

Finally, there's the issue of someone like Blake Christian. Now I know who Christian is and several other people will, but he means nothing Ring Of Honor. He has won one singles match in ROH this year and that was in August, which was also his most recent match. Christian hasn't wrestled in AEW since last spring and has never won a match on AEW TV. I'm aware he's a big deal in GCW and had a run in Japan, but if I don't follow those promotions, I have little idea who Christian is because he's someone who just pops in periodically and loses. Now he's getting a title shot? Come up with something better than that.

Komander gets a nice reception for his victory.

We get long previews of upcoming AEW shows.

The House Of Torture wants a Tag Team Title match at Wrestle Dynasty.

We recap Matt Cardona challenging Chris Jericho for the ROH World Title. Jericho wants to face a New Yorker so Cardona stepped up. This resulted in Jericho proving that he is a REAL New Yorker, despite knowing very little about New York. That's your main event, despite Cardona never wrestling in ROH before.

Ring Of Honor World Title: Chris Jericho vs. Matt Cardona

Jericho, with Bryan Keith and some knockoff Rockettes, comes out to a Frank Sinatra song and is wearing an I Heart New York

shirt. Jericho mocks the crowd to start and gets caught with a quick Radio Silence for two. The Reboot misses in the corner as Jericho bails to the floor, allowing Cardona to hit a big flip dive.

Back in and Cardona whips him with the belt, as I guess rules are lax here. Jericho gets in a backdrop on the ramp and a dropkick knocks Cardona off the apron. This time Jericho follows him out and shoves who appears to be Cardona's father in the crowd. That earns him a big running forearm but Jericho sends Cardona into the post to cut off the comeback. Back in and Jericho hits a super hurricanrana but misses a charge, allowing Cardona to hit a middle rope dropkick for two.

Cardona misses a regular dropkick and gets Lionsaulted for a near fall. The Walls attempt is countered into a spinebuster and a tiger driver gets two. Jericho hits a Codebreaker for two of his own and they trade big boots for a double knockdown. This time Jericho gets the Walls but Cardona is quickly out. Keith's interference doesn't go well as Jericho is sent into him, allowing Cardona to get two off a rollup.

Another Radio Silence is countered into the Walls, with Cardona making the ropes again. Cue the returning Big Bill to kick Cardona in the face for two but he's back with his own Codebreaker for his own two. Bill offers a distraction though and Keith comes in with a belt shot so Jericho can retain at 18:26.

Rating: B-. Again, another long match on a very long show and it wasn't getting up the level to make it need that much time. It was a bunch of Jericho cutting Cardona off and then Cardona falling victim to the numbers game. That doesn't make for an interesting match, but rather a 2003 HHH formula which wasn't good back then either. This was the biggest match coming in and it just barely worked here.

Post match the beatdown is on but Bandido returns for the

save. Ignore him slamming his head on the mat when he comes in with a dropkick and clearly being knocked for a loop.

We recap Athena defending the Women's Title against Billie Starkz. Last year, Athena treated her badly and then beat her in the main event. Since then, she's still treated Starkz badly and now Starkz asked for a rematch. That's how the main event of the biggest show of the year was set up.

Women's Title: Athena vs. Billie Starkz

Athena (in a Two Face theme) is defending and gets a special introduction from Lexi Nair. They shake hands to start and take turns trading shots in the corner. Starkz hits a big boot but gets kicked out of the air to slow that down again. The cravate brings Starkz back up but her spinning kick to the face is countered into a Brock Lock. Starkz gets out but is powerbombed right back down so Athena can go after the leg.

Said leg gets tied up in the ropes for some hard kicks and Starkz falls outside, where Athena yells at what seems to be Starkz's mom (eh Jericho did it better). Starkz gets in a shot for a breather but Athena fights out of an electric chair. The leg is almost wrapped around the post but Starkz pulls her face first instead. Back in and something close to Cross Rhodes gives Starkz two and we hit the chinlock.

Something like a brainbuster gives Starkz two but Athena is back with a shot to the leg. A springboard spinning crossbody gets two on Starkz but the 0 Face is countered into a German suplex. They fight over a Tombstone until Starkz connects for two, giving us a shocked knockout face. Athena's powerbomb onto the apron is countered into an Alabama Slam, allowing Starkz to hit a Swanton to the floor.

Back in and Athena throws her out to the floor again, meaning it's a suicide dive onto Starkz and the referee. Lexi Nair uses the opening to hand Athena a microphone but Starkz kicks it out of her hand. Something like a One Winged Angel gets two

but Athena manages to pull a turnbuckle pad off. Starkz goes head first into the steel and the O Face retains the title at 25:31.

Rating: B. They were in a weird place here as Starkz's challenge was as pathetic as you could get and it would have been pretty lame to see her knock off Athena a year after she should have. At the same time, the Fabulous Moolah would think this Athena reign has gone on lone enough.

There is no one in AEW worth anything that she hasn't beaten yet, to the point where this is the same match from last year's Final Battle main event. I'm not sure what this is supposed to accomplish anymore and while Athena is still great, she has LONG moved passed the time where she should be on the main roster. It was a long, back and forth match, but the leg stuff just stopped mattering and it could have been about ten minutes shorter, especially as it was almost midnight by the time the match ended.

Athena and Nair celebrate to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling itself was fine to rather good with nothing close to a truly bad match. That's all well and good and there isn't much to criticize from the in-ring side of things. That being said, OH MY GOODNESS STOP WITH THESE ALMOST FIVE HOUR SHOWS! I wasn't enjoying the last hour plus of the show because I was just so sick of the whole thing because it kept going.

There is no need to have a good chunk of this show (multiple matches with no backstory or people making their debuts), plus the last three matches adding up to over an hour bell to bell. There comes a point where the show needs to end and Tony Khan has never quite figured that out. It was far from a bad show, but you shouldn't be able to cut off nearly two hours from a show without missing much. Just stop putting so much on these shows already, because it is really bringing things down.

Results

Grizzled Young Veterans b. Dark Order – High/Low to Silver
Hanako b. Harley Cameron – Torture rack faceplant
Undisputed Kingdom b. Infantry – Rockstar Supernova to Dean
Gates Of Agony b. LeeJ – Open The Gates to Johnson
Atlantis Jr. b. Mansoor – Frog splash
Katsuyori Shibata b. Tommy Billington – Sleeper
Jay Lethal b. QT Marshall – Lethal Injection
Red Velvet b. Leyla Hirsch – Wrench to the face
Lee Moriarty b. Nigel McGuinness – Border City Stretch with
ropes
Sons Of Texas b. The Righteous – Cowbell to Dutch's head
Komander won Survival Of The Fittest last eliminating Blake
Christian
Chris Jericho b. Matt Cardona – Belt shot from Bryan Keith
Athena b. Billie Starkz – 0 Face

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