

Mae Young Classic Episode Eight – Someone Has to Lose

Mae Young Classic Episode #8

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's semifinals time and that means we should be in for some nice, long matches. It wouldn't surprise me if we didn't get a bonus match thrown in as well and that wouldn't be the worst idea in the world. Hopefully they can live up to the expectations as the matches have been good but nothing great. The extra time should help a lot so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week.

JR and Lita offer a preview.

Video on Shayna Baszler, who held that choke longer last week to send a message.

Video on Mercedes Martinez, who says this is the culmination of her career. We also see clips of Martinez training Baszler, which offers a very nice bonus aspect to the match. Why wasn't that mentioned before?

Semifinals: Shayna Baszler vs. Mercedes Martinez

Baszler shakes hands this time. Martinez isn't as polite and slugs away at Baszler with right hands and chops in the corner. A kick to the ribs is blocked but Martinez just lets it go, seemingly in an attempt to get inside Baszler's head. The threat of a running kick sets up a chinlock, which isn't a rear naked choke no matter how much JR seems to think it is.

Baszler sends her into the corner and hammers away before getting two off a gutwrench suplex. A kneebar has Martinez in trouble until she finally kicks away. This time it's Martinez grabbing a hold of her own with something like a Regal Stretch before they forearm it out from their

knees. Baszler gets the better of it but Mercedes fights up into a fisherman's suplex to put Baszler down. The fisherman's buster is countered into the rear naked choke and Mercedes finally taps at 8:10.

Rating: B. Baszler winning is the absolute right call, especially with the Four Horsewomen battle coming up. Martinez doesn't have a background in WWE but they've treated her as a major deal, which makes it more impressive to have Baszler beat her. Good match here, which is becoming the trend around here.

They hug post match with Stephanie McMahon (well duh), HHH and Sara Amoto out to congratulate Baszler.

Video on Toni Storm, who is here to win.

Video on Kairi Sane, who promises to win. I was hoping she was here for a flagon of rum and a treasure hunt.

Semifinals: Kairi Sane vs. Toni Storm

Sane takes Toni down and rides her for a bit until Storm slips out of a chinlock. That's fine with Kairi who hits a running dropkick and starts smiling. Storm goes with a shot to the face for two, only to get pulled to the floor with her back landing on the apron. Kairi adds a big dive to put Storm down again and it's off to a Boston crab.

The sliding forearm is blocked with some raised boots though (smart) and it's the running hip attack rocking Kairi. Storm tries another one but takes a clothesline to the ribs (not quite a spear) to cut her off again. They slug it out with Kairi getting the better of it but she gets caught on top. Storm gets two off a fisherman's suplex.

It's off to a flip over armbar (ala Tommaso Ciampa) with Toni CRANKING on that thing. Kairi finally rolls over to the other side for two but can't follow up. Toni's top rope legdrop hits the back but she bangs herself up at the same time. Kairi kicks her down again and hits the top rope elbow for the pin at 12:24.

Rating: B+. This might have been the best match of the tournament so far, or at least the hardest hitting. Kairi winning was pretty obvious and

there was no secret to the fact that it was going to be her vs. Baszler, almost from the beginning. Storm looked great again here and if they don't sign her, they're dumber than I thought.

Sane gets the victory celebration as well. Baszler comes out for the showdown with JR getting in the usually awesome summary line: the one with the biggest fight in the dog is fighting the biggest dog in the yard.

Overall Rating: A-. I'm ready for the finals and that's a good thing. The two matches were both quite good and I want to see the winners beat the heck out of each other next week. They've built both of them up as unbeatable, which is what makes for an awesome showdown in the end. Really good good show here and the best thing they've done so far.

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Mae Young Classic Episode Seven: New Orleans on April 8

is a Place and Time

Mae Young Classic Episode #7

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

We're down to the final eight and that means four quarterfinal matches tonight. You can probably guess what's coming for the final four but that's what makes these rounds exciting: there's the chance of a big upset and that could change everything. Things were a lot better in the second round and hopefully that's the case here too. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of how all eight made it to the quarterfinals.

No bio videos here, though to be fair you should know who they are at this point.

Quarterfinals: Abbey Laith vs. Mercedes Martinez

Abbey takes her down in a test of strength to start until a hard palm strike to the jaw slows Laith down. Mercedes headlocks her for a bit before a heck of a slap staggers Abbey again. A spinning kick is countered so Abbey just does the splits instead of getting dropped again. Laith kicks at the arm a bit and JR brings up the two years off that Mercedes needed for a shoulder injury. That little background information often helps things so much and I wish we got more of it in WWE.

Abbey chops her back and kicks Mercedes in the head for two. That just earns Abbey a hard whip into the post and they fight to the apron with Lita joining the IT'S THE HARDEST PART OF THE RING club. Abbey kicks her out to the floor (which hasn't been the case very often in the tournament) for a crossbody to leave both of them laying.

Back in and Abbey tries to get fired up but Mercedes sends her outside for a breather. That goes nowhere so Abbey grabs a bridging German suplex for two, drawing a heck of a scream out of Laith on the kickout. Mercedes grabs the fisherman's buster for the pin at 8:57 in another fast finish.

Rating: B. These finishes coming out of nowhere aren't doing much for me and they're becoming a pattern around here. Mercedes advancing is the right call as she's been treated as a veteran killer so sending her to the semifinals makes sense. Good match here too, which is all you can ask for.

Johnny Gargano is here and you know what that means.

Quarterfinals: Candice LeRae vs. Shayna Baszler

The winner gets Martinez in the semifinals. Shayna wastes no time with a hard knee lift and looks like she's toying with Candice to start. A kick misses though and Shayna crotches herself to give Candice a breather. Shayna gets sent outside for a suicide dive into a DDT (cool) to drop her on her head. Back in and we hit an Octopus hold on Baszler, followed by the Gargano Escape for a nice touch. Baszler calmly powers her up for a side slam and tries a super gutwrench suplex. Ms. LeRae's Wild Ride is easily countered into the rear naked choke for the tap at 3:11.

Rating: C+. They were getting going here until the very sudden ending, though this was the right idea. The idea behind Baszler is that she can finish you in the blink of an eye and that's exactly what they should be going for with her. LeRae is going to be fine wherever she goes and that suicide DDT was freaking sweet. Throw in the submission tease and they had me going a few times here. Give this more time though and it's instantly better.

Baszler won't let go of the hold, to the point where I thought they were going to reverse the decision for a second. She even kicks at LeRae as the doctors check on her. Now that's how you book a heel.

Quarterfinals: Piper Niven vs. Toni Storm

Storm takes the far bigger Niven into the corner and gives her a playful tap on the jaw. For some reason Toni thinks a test of strength is a good idea with Niven taking her down. Storm bridges up and Niven can't break it for an impressive strength display. Like, a very impressive one as Toni isn't that big. They bridge up at the same time and shake hands upside down for a cute bit.

Niven powers her down and gets two off a splash, followed by Toni getting the same off a crossbody. Two more splashes give Piper the same so Toni grabs a Backstabber (popular move in this tournament) for a breather. A German suplex is countered into the Michinoku Driver for two and Piper is stunned. She tries the Vader Bomb, only to get caught in a German superplex. A top rope legdrop sends Storm on at 7:36.

Rating: C+. I don't think anyone was buying the idea that Niven was anything more than a dragon for someone to slay. Storm is as good of an option as anyone else as she has a great look and feels like someone they want to push the heck out of, especially over time. Good enough match here and while Storm isn't making it to the finals, she's getting noticed, which is often more important.

Baszler's fellow Four Horsewomen are proud of her win but here are Bayley, Charlotte and Becky Lynch for the staredown. Rousey: "Anytime, anyplace." Say....New Orleans perhaps? Maybe early April?

Funaki is here.

Quarterfinals: Kairi Sane vs. Dakota Kai

Kairi headlocks her down to start and the fans seem pleased at an early standoff. A spinning backfist misses and Kai gives her a martial arts pose. Kairi takes her into the corner for some hard chops as this is getting physical. The fans are behind Kairi but get quieted down with a running kick to the jaw in the corner. Kairi is tired of getting hit in the face so she spears Kai down for a breather.

Kai hits another running kick in the corner but gets sent into the corner. Kairi can't hit a superplex but can avoid a top rope double stomp with Kai tweaking the knee on the landing. A top rope Phenomenal Forearm gives Kairi two but Kai kicks her down again. Another running kick in the corner misses though and it's an Alabama Slam it's the top rope elbow to send Sane to the semifinals at 7:42.

Rating: B. I'm starting to get the appeal of Sane and a lot of it is due to having her do stuff like this. Kai was very game here and that made for a more entertaining match. People like Sane are going to get more out

of this than by squashing someone so it's definitely the right call. Kai will have a job in WWE if she wants one but this is Sane's tournament to win. Maybe.

The semifinals are set:

Kairi Sane

Toni Storm

Mercedes Martinez

Shayna Baszler

Overall Rating: B. I'm not sure what it says that I'm more interested in the Four Horsewomen battle than the tournament but that was definitely one of the big draws of this whole thing. The final four are interesting and while you can almost pencil in Sane vs. Baszler for the whole thing, that's not the worst result in the world. Good show here and I'm fired up for the last two shows.

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Mae Young Classic Episode Five: No Mercy Lives!

Mae Young Classic Episode #5

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

The fast paced shows continue as we have four more episodes being released today before we get ready for next week's live finale. We're down to sixteen competitors to go and for the most part, I'm coming into this blind on the spoilers. It's hard to say where some of these matches are going to go so let's get to it.

Mauro handles the opening recap again.

The remaining entrants are on stage.

Video on Abbey Laith, who has wrestled for years and is here now.

Video on Rachel Evers, who was originally scheduled to lose in the first round but Marti Belle was so horrible that they changed plans mid-match.

Kassius Ohno is here.

Second Round: Abbey Laith vs. Rachel Evers

The fans sound split here as Rachel shoves her down to start, only to get wristdragged to the floor. Back in and a Stunner of all things puts Abbey down but they hit stereo bicycle kicks for a double knockdown. Abbey sticks with the kicks, including a high one off the side of Evers' head to send her straight down. She's up fast enough to catch Abbey on top with a super powerslam of all things for two. Cool looking move if nothing else. Evers tries another kick but gets dropped with a powerbomb, setting up the Alligator Clutch for the pin at 4:51.

Rating: C-. This started off a bit awkward but got better as things went on. Laith feels like someone they're ready to push pretty hard,

especially given her background on the indy scene. Evers just needs a lot more ring time, though she has the look and pedigree to make a pretty nice run for herself one day.

Video on Serena Deeb, who is very aggressive and will work hard.

Video on Piper Niven, who wants to be tough but with a big smile.

Second Round: Serena Deeb vs. Piper Niven

Niven powers her into the corner to start and falls on Deeb in a slam attempt. Well to be fair that was just kind of dumb. A hard belly to back suplex breaks up Serena's headlock and there's a splash for two more. With the holds not working, Deeb opts for just punching her in the face for a change. A middle rope Codebreaker (or maybe something like a monkey flip) drops Niven and a neckbreaker gets two.

Deeb is right back up with a modified Diamond Cutter for two more as the fans are split again. A charge misses in the corner though and Niven drops a Vader Bomb...for two. Dang I would have bet on that one. Niven heads up top (uh oh) and misses a splash, only to grab the Michinoku Driver to put Deeb away at 7:12.

Rating: C. What in the world was that ending? Niven missed the splash to seemingly give Deeb a hope spot but she was up less than five seconds later and hit the finish for the pin. I looked away for a second and my head swung back because I thought the video had skipped. They were trying to get into the Sting vs. Vader formula here but that ending REALLY knocked them back.

Video on Princesa Sugehit, who may be a veteran but needs to win this tournament.

Video on Mercedes Martinez, who has waited a long time for this opportunity.

Kalisto is here.

Second Round: Princesa Sugehit vs. Mercedes Martinez

Sugehit, in Wonder Woman themed gear, takes her down by the arm and tries a quick rollup for two. Another rollup, this time into the corner, gets the same on Martinez but she's right back with Two Amigos into a draping swinging neckbreaker. Princesa grabs a Codebreaker but has to block a superplex attempt. Instead it's a tornado DDT (now a big spot on the indy Bingo card) for two on Martinez and both of them are spent less than five minutes in. One heck of a Fujiwara armbar has Martinez in more trouble but she pops up and hits a fisherman's buster for the pin at 5:09.

Rating: C. What is with these sudden endings? Sugehit was dominating and then got caught by one move, seemingly out of nowhere, for the pin. Mercedes winning certainly isn't a surprise but they could have done a better job of laying the match out. You have almost all the time you want and there's no need to cut them down this fast.

Video on Bianca Belair, whose hair whip thing is still stupid.

Video on Kairi Sane, who is perhaps the most awesome thing ever.

Second Round: Bianca Belair vs. Kairi Sane

Kairi gets taken down to start and we hit a headlock as JR continues to brag about how awesome of an athlete Belair is. Back up and Belair blows her a kiss, only to have Sane grab it out of the air and stomp it on the mat. One heck of a forearm drops Belair but she hits the hair whip (So you can use it to whip people but get yelled at for pulling it?) to take over.

A delayed vertical suplex with some squats gets two and we hit a seated full nelson. So she's a No Mercy fan? Some ground and pound of all things has Kairi down but she gets her knees up to stop a splash. Kairi does those rapid fire chops in the corner that probably don't hurt much but they're done in Japan and therefore they must be awesome.

A seated double arm choke (another No Mercy move) has Belair in trouble until she fights up and gets in a double chickenwing slam. One heck of a 450 gets a red hot near fall on Sane and Bianca is stunned. Kairi kicks her down and hits a running corner clothesline, followed by the top rope elbow (which she almost completely misses as her hip makes contact

instead) to eliminate Belair at 10:00.

Rating: B. I'll give this one a higher rating for the No Mercy based offense and the hair thing being gone. Sane is clearly the top star in this whole thing and I'd be surprised if she doesn't win the whole thing. Belair is a heck of an athlete and that 450 looked awesome. She'll be a big deal in NXT for a good while and then on the main roster assuming she has any kind of talking ability.

A recap wraps things up.

Overall Rating: B-. Now we're getting to the fun part where they're having big names face other big names. The wrestling is getting better too and that can make for some sweet matches. I'm looking forward to where things go from here and the rest of the tournament, assuming it's given time, should be a lot of fun.

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Mae Young Classic – Episode

Four: And There's the Winner

Mae Young Classic Episode #4

Date: August 28, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's the end of the first round here and there's a good chance we'll be seeing the tournament winner making her debut. There are a few big names still to go and that means it's time for some showcases. We'll also know the second round by the end of this episode and that means it's time for big names to collide and things to really take off. Let's get to it.

Long recap of the whole tournament so far and a preview of what we're seeing tonight.

Opening sequence.

Video on Renee Michelle who is ready to show how awesome women can be.

Video on Candice LeRae, who is one of the biggest names in the tournament. She's also married to Johnny Gargano but wants no special treatment.

Gargano is in the front row.

First Round: Candice LeRae vs. Renee Michelle

Feeling out process to start as a fan yells something that makes the crowd laugh. They trade rollups into a standoff as this is a VERY pro-Candice crowd. Candice sends her into the corner for a missile dropkick but Renee is back with kicks of her own. Renee gets kicked off and a jumping neckbreaker gives Candice two. Candice misses a charge in the corner but manages to avoid a middle rope moonsault. They head up top and it's Miss LeRae's Wild Ride (super swinging neckbreaker) for the pin on Renee at 5:37.

Rating: C-. Nothing to see here though you can tell LeRae is a step above a lot of these people. The fans are clearly into her and that's the kind

of reaction that's going to guarantee at least a spot in the second round. Good enough match here with Michelle looking perfectly acceptable as well.

Video on Lacey Evans, a former Marine who has made some appearances in NXT before.

Video on Taynara Conti, a judoka from Brazil, who is ready to fight anyone.

Alexa Bliss (and I believe Bayley's fan Izzy behind her) is here.

First Round: Taynara Conti vs. Lacey Evans

The fans get behind Lacey with the USA chants as Conti fires off some knees to the ribs. An armbar has Conti in some trouble until an over the head throw takes Evans down. A shot to the chest takes Conti back down and something like a Bronco Buster has her in more trouble. Evans throws Conti on her back for a kneeling piledriver and the pin at 4:43.

Rating: C-. Not much to see here and I'm a bit surprised that Conti, who seemed to be built up as a big deal, got beaten down that easily. Evans has been around WWE for a little while, now so her winning isn't a big shock, but that was quite the quick exit for Conti. Evans doesn't do much for me but she's got something with the ex-military thing.

Video on Reina Gonzalez, a second generation wrestler and a powerhouse.

Video on Nicole Savoy, the self-described queen of suplexes.

First Round: Nicole Savoy vs. Reina Gonzalez

Reina is sporting chaps and a Phantom of the Opera mask. You see something new every day (weekly at worst) in wrestling. Feeling out process to start with the far smaller Nicole not being able to take Gonzalez down. A hurricanrana is shoved away and a hard clothesline drops Savoy. Reina plants her again with a sidewalk slam and a reverse Boston crab, only to get pulled down into something like a Kimura. A cross armbreaker works a lot better and Reina taps at 4:46.

Rating: C-. Not the worst match in the world but Savoy didn't throw a single suplex, which was her main talking point in her video. Gonzalez was a bit slower than she probably should have been and that hurt things a lot. The ending hurt it a bit too as Nicole was dominated and then came back with two moves to win. That's not the best thing in the world, but it was at least watchable. Kind of like Reina in general.

Video on Tessa Blanchard, another second generation wrestler who turns into a different person in the ring. She's been around NXT for a good while now.

Video on Kairi Sane, a Japanese star who likes pirates. She's probably the favorite in the whole tournament.

First Round; Kairi Sane vs. Tessa Blanchard

Kairi is very pale. Feeling out process to start with Kairi putting her on the ropes for a clean break. A cradle gives Kairi two and a running Blockbuster drops Tessa again. Tessa comes back with a running neckbreaker of her own before a middle rope Codebreaker gets two more. Some hard forearms stun Sane but she's right back with a spear to cut Tessa off.

Something like a top rope Phenomenal Forearm drops Tessa for two and the fans are split again. Tessa gets two off a belly to back suplex and a top rope backsplash gets the same. Kairi's sliding forearm is countered into a crucifix for two but she kicks Tessa down again. Kairi points to the elbow and drops one heck of a top rope elbow for the pin at 8:39.

Rating: B. I don't know if it was enough to live up to Kairi's hype but this was the best match of the first round. Tessa was more than game here and if she's not pushed at least to like halfway to the clouds (the moon might be too far this soon), I'm not sure what WWE is thinking. Sane is likely the favorite to win the thing but it was a smart idea to have her sweat a bit in the first round.

They hug post match.

We don't actually see the full second round brackets but here they are.

Abbey Laith

Rachel Evers

Princesa Sugehit

Mercedes Martinez

Nicole Savoy

Candice LeRae

Mia Yim

Shayna Baszler

Kairi Sane

Bianca Belair

Dakota Kai

Rhea Ripley

Serena Deeb

Piper Niven

Lacey Evans

Toni Storm

Overall Rating: C+. The main event alone is worth seeing and the rest of the card is more than watchable. It's a lot better now that we know who is advancing to the second round as a lot of the deadwood has been cleared out. There hasn't been that blow away match yet but the main event here was solid enough. I've liked what I've seen so far and the second round should be an upgrade, especially in match quality. Good show here and hopefully it keeps getting better.

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