

Chikara Off the Hook: How Did I Reach This Point In My Life?

Off the Hook

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So this is an interesting one as I was actually in the arena (as in The Arena) for the show. I'm far from familiar with Chikara but I know enough about it to have some form of idea of what I'm watching. This was my first time seeing them live and it was a rather entertaining night, especially for \$20 for the last row (last out of four that is). Let's get to it.

Now for those of you that aren't familiar, Chikara is basically a comic book come to life in a wrestling promotion. There are cults, secret organizations, mind control, wrestling ants and blowing up a bus full of children. When you get into something like this, you have to know what you're signing up for. You can't expect WWE style or production values, along with expecting a very indy style experience.

It should also be noted that this season's main story (yeah Chikara is divided into seasons, with an actual offseason) is a multi-team competition called Challenge of the Immortals. The roster has been divided into ten four person teams. Each team will face off against each other at least once with the captains picking the stipulations. No word on what the prize is for the winning team.

Finally, I'm probably not going to know a lot of the details and backstories here. Chikara is one of those places with an incredibly deep and complicated history and there's almost no way to keep track of everything. I apologize in advance for any mistakes I make though I'm sure I'll be corrected on them.

The opening sequence is almost identical to the Marvel Studios logo. Again: I love that they aren't hiding what they're doing. It makes things so much easier.

We get graphics of all the matches on the card.

The arena really was small with maybe 150 people in the arena at most. I was sitting opposite the hard camera so on the off chance you see this show, I'm in the fourth row in the Superman shirt.

The announcer (Alex Pearlman, a guy who doesn't seem to be that well known. He was a really good host though and held the show together all night.) welcomes us to the show, with his mic cutting off a few times in the middle. The only problem here was he said they were going to blow the roof off the place. It was raining pretty hard that night so does he want everyone to get wet?

Challenge of the Immortals: Orange Cassidy/Drew Gulak vs. Ophidian/Shynron

Gentleman's Club vs. Snake Pit. Each team has their own flag which is a very nice touch. Gulak is a British style wrestler and Cassidy wrestles in sunglasses and torn jeans. Cassidy and Shynron start things off with Orange grabbing a headlock. Cassidy: "I want out! This is too much!" He takes off the sunglasses as the announcers are ripping on Cassidy for being lazy and exhausted.

Cassidy runs in slow motion and taps against Shynron for a shoulder before tripping him down. The comedy is actually working here as Cassidy trips but claims it was a splash. Off to Ophidian vs. Gulak for the actual wrestling portion. They hit the mat for some nice counters until Ophidian bounces off the mat several times to escape a wristlock. Cassidy tags himself in and asks for a test of strength. You can see the joke coming from here.

The much smaller Ophidian puts him down with one arm as referee Bryce Remsburg (one of the stars of the show) says this was Cassidy's idea. Now Cassidy wants Shynron. Ophidian: "You sure about that buddy?" Shynron moonsaults off the middle rope and moonsaults right up to Cassidy who

immediately tags out. Gulak easily wrestles Shynron to the mat and starts working on the arm before getting rolled up for two. It's back to Cassidy vs. Ophidian with Cassidy taking a nap with a stuffed tiger.

Ophidian gets smart and tries a quiet count but Gulak shouts FREE BAGEL BITES at two, making Cassidy snap up and small package Ophidian for two. Cassidy asks for a weapons check of all things and gets caught in a reverse Tumbleweed of all things for two for a bunch of two counts. Gulak comes in for a rolling cradle of his own but still can't end this comedy. Shynron tries some handsprings into a headscissors on Drew but has to settle for a victory roll instead.

Back to Ophidian vs. Cassidy with the snake man headstanding on the top turnbuckle and hissing. A very complicated rollup gets two on Orange and it's back to the wrestlers for a crisscross into a sunset flip from Drew. Shynron's springboard is countered into an electric chair which is countered into a hurricanrana for two but it's time for the partners to come in and turn the hold over about a dozen times in a row. Cassidy: "STOP IT!"

Cassidy complains to the referee that he's trying to win the match and Ophidian is over here trying to win the match too. Totally unfair! The fans want a hug and Ophidian offers a handshake. Cassidy tries a trick of course and gets rolled up to give Ophidian the pin at 14:01 with Gulak (where was he anyway?) being a second late.

Rating: C+. This was longer than it needed to be but it was the perfect way to set the tone for the show. The comedy was really working here with Cassidy as a good slacker and Gulak the completely opposite partner. The Snake Pit could have been any given combination and the match would have worked just fine. Really entertaining stuff with the wrestling as a backdrop, which is going to be a trend all night.

Pragash Sabar, who is basically an X-Pac tribute character from Pakistan, says Farmer Frog (just go with it) isn't poisonous enough for him. He gets in a few Sean Waltman jabs for good measure. Waltman has to show up (again) and squash him good and strong.

Pragash Sabar vs. Farmer Frog

He's a frog who farms and certainly NOT the Estonian Thunder Frog who died recently. We get another weapons check and the referee finds....cucumbers on Sabar? Sabar bails to the floor and hands a fan two more cucumbers. I really don't want to know the joke here. The much bigger Frog shoves him down a few times before grabbing Pragash by his big fake tongue. That means it's time for the armpit to the tongue and I have no idea how I reached this point in my life.

Sabar goes to the floor for a breather (and so fans can rub his tongue), allowing Frog to come off the top with an ax handle. Back in and a Cannonball sets up a delayed gordbuster (Frog: "OOPSIE!" Oopsie?) for two. The Slop Drop (for once that name makes sense) is broken up though and Sabar gets two of his own off a high cross body.

Some X-Pac kicks in the corner (and a few licks of the hand) set up the Bronco Buster (Chikarason: "Five hit combo.") for two, mainly because it's not a move you pin people with. Frog grabs an Oklahoma Stampede of all things but Sabar bails to the floor and tries to get his cucumbers back. That goes nowhere so Frog hammers away in the corner, only to get powerbombed down into a rollup with Sabar putting his feet on the ropes for the pin at 7:44.

Rating: D. I wasn't feeling this one and the match really didn't work that well. Neither guy showed off that much as it's kind of hard to get into a match between Henry Godwinn/Brian Knobbs as a frog (which didn't change much) vs. X-Pac with a long tongue. It's not a terrible match or anything but I didn't care too much for it. This might have been edited as the live notes I had listed it as longer but I didn't notice any major edits.

Sabar gets his cucumbers back. I still don't get it.

AC/DC (Arik Cannon, wearing a Less Than Jake shirt, as in the band that sang We're All Dudes in the cinematic classic Good Burger, and Darin Corbin) are ready for their match. Corbin calls Cannon for fun but Cannon yells at him for not taking this more seriously. Darin suggests slow motion tonight. Oh dear indeed.

AC/DC vs. Lucas Calhoun/Missile Assault Man

Calhoun is an Elvis impersonator and Missile Assault Man used to be an ant but was brainwashed into being extra aggressive by a shadow corporation (or something like that). From what I understand, they're followers of a guy who was murdering various wrestlers last season (just go with it). Man and Cannon get things going and a quick armdrag sends Man outside, which is as good as a tag around here.

Corbin comes in as well and it's time for a karate demonstration (Chikarason: "The school of Stan Lane vs. watching a lot of Mighty Morphin Power Rangers."). A little dancing leads to Corbin putting on a karate headband but Calhoun punches him in the ribs and rips it apart. More karate leads to a slap fight and that's enough for Man as he drags them apart. Corbin sends both guys to the floor for a big dive before telling Cannon they should isolate Calhoun. A double dropkick gets two for AC/DC but Man comes in and dropkicks Darin down for the same.

We get a Missile Assault MAN stomp (with one letter per stomp) as the match settles into something like wrestling. A kick to the head gets two for Calhoun and rolling northern lights suplexes get the same for Man. Corbin elbows both guys away and the hot tag brings in Cannon so everything can break down. Man is sent to the floor and a double superkick gets two on Calhoun.

After a quick interlude from Man, we hit SLOW MOTION. Corbin Stuns Calhoun as even the announcers are speaking slowly. A fan in the crowd says Missile Assault Man sucks in slow speak as well. Cannon gets two off a backslide and now it's back to full speed with Calhoun eating an RK0, only to have Corbin walk into a Brogue Kick from Man for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: C-. I was getting into this one until the slow motion kicked in. I've seen the bit before and while it's a cool idea, it really takes me out of the match. It's ok to just have a match end once in awhile, though to be fair that's the kind of rule that you see for a match in a bigger company. Man and Calhoun were kind of working as an oddball tag team and AC/DC are a good choice for a midcard pairing. Good enough match to start but it needed to have a better finish.

Challenge of the Immortals: Blind Rage vs. Eddie Kingston

Nightmare Warriors (captained by Grand Champion Hallowicked, which will become important in a bit) vs. Snake Pit. Rage is a generic guy with red paint on his face and Kingston (coming in with a bad knee) is a big star known as the War King. Kingston has some issues getting his robe off in a funny bit. Eddie works on a top wristlock and shouts that Hallowicked isn't here to save Rage. A snapmare puts Rage down and Eddie slaps him in the of the head. Kingston: "It's ok. I'm a tweener."

Rage gets smart with a dragon screw leg whip but Kingston fights up from the mat in a nice touch. Kingston gets in some weak knees to the back but gets dropkicked in the knee to slow him down again. A middle rope knee to Blind's head (with Eddie limping after landing on the bad knee) sets up a DDT for two. The spinning backfist (Eddie's finisher) misses and a Michinoku Driver gives Rage two more.

Some really weak looking rapid fire chops (I have yet to see those look good from anyone) from Kingston have Rage in trouble but he gets caught in a sitout powerbomb from the corner. They're way too spent for only being eight minutes into a match. Rage misses a top rope double stomp and rolls outside, allowing Hallowicked to run in for a DDT. A quick STF gives Rage the knockout win at 8:16.

Rating: D+. Rage really didn't hold my interest very well here but you could see that Kingston is one of the better guys they have. He carries himself better than most guys on the roster and he actually sold the knee really well. The ending was a good idea as there's only so much you can do to have a guy like Rage look credible against one of the biggest names in the promotion.

Kingston yells at the referee for missing the interference. Referee: "I was outside." Kingston: "ARE YOU KIDDING ME???"

Intermission, with a lot of the wrestlers coming to ringside to sell shirts. The handful that I talked to were all very nice and it was a really pleasant experience for a change.

Challenge of the Immortals: Juan Francisco de Coronado/Proletariat Boar

of Moldova vs. Jakob Hammermeier/Soldier Ant

United Nations (Coronado is one of the bigger heels in the company) vs. Bruderschaft des Kreuzes (a former mega heel stable who are now barely a thing. The United Nations take their sweet time coming to the ring with Pearlman and Rensburg taking a nap in the corner during the entrance. Pearlman does their introduction in slow motion ("Making their way to the ring.....eventually.....at their own pace....."). The Boar of course has a tail. Soldier Ant seems to be under mind control of some sort (Fan: "Remember who you are Soldier Ant!") which is likely a very interesting backstory because they always are around here.

No commentary on this match for some reason. Coronado respects Jakob for being a foreigner and offers a handshake. Jakob offers his left hand and attacks ("YOU CAN'T TRUST THE GERMANS!") before grabbing Coronado's bowtie. It's time for a test of strength but both heels go for kicks to the ribs. Juan: "I THOUGHT I LIKED YOU!"

They both poke each other in the eyes and it's off to the Boar for a spinebuster/dropkick combo. The heels (as in Coronado and the Boar) stomp away in the corner until Jakob crashes to the floor, which again counts as a tag. Soldier Ant comes in for a clothesline on Juan and a Liger Kick to the Boar. A not very giant swing sends Juan flying and it's off to some freaky leg lock. Juan gets thrown around and then out to the floor, allowing Boar to come in instead.

The Ant beats him up too until Juan grabs his foot, only to be terrified by the Ant staring down at him (well in theory as you can't see his face). Boar's Samoan drop gives Juan two and the Ant's layout powerbomb from the corner gets the same. The Ant starts boxing the Boar (another thing I never expected to type) until the tailed one kicks the Soldier outside. Jakob remembers he's in this match and goes after the Boar, only to eat a spear for the pin at 10:49.

Rating: C. Chikara is interesting as this competition is basically throwing a bunch of people together for what feel like random matches, even though they make sense when you know the story. That being said, most of these matches are working well enough and the competition gives

the match some meaning, even if it doesn't feel like it all the time. Fun enough match here though with Soldier Ant stealing most of the show.

Blaster McMassive, a guy who is exactly what his name sounds like, snaps a Slim Jim, just like he's going to do to Chuck Taylor's neck tonight.

Challenge of the Immortals: Blaster McMassive vs. Chuck Taylor

Wrecking Crew vs. Gentleman's Club. Taylor is a big star and known as the Kentucky Gentlemen (I think I have a Chikara favorite) but he's on a retirement tour (which might see him go to WWE as he's only 29). Chuck breaks up the posing with a dropkick to the floor, followed by a quick dive.

Back in and a jawbreaker is broken up so we hit a chinlock from Blaster. Taylor fights up for an octopus hold of all things, only to get kicked in the head for two. They slug it out until Taylor grabs a release Rock Bottom for two. There's a DDT for the same but Taylor misses something off the top and walks into a sitout Boss Man Slam for the pin at 5:32.

Rating: C-. Quick match here but power vs. speed is still one of the best stories you can run no matter what. Another good enough match here but the time was kind of surprising. If Taylor is supposed to be a big deal, you don't expect to see him lose in just a few minutes. Not bad but it needed more time.

Dasher's Dugout (the team leading the competition coming into the show) is ready but they don't like missing Young Lions Cup holder and fourth partner Heidi Lovelace. They have Princess KimberLee as a fourth though so it's not the worst thing in the world.

Dasher Hatfield/Icarus/Mark Angelosetti/Princess KimberLee vs. Hallowicked/NRG/Heidi Lovelace

This is challengers vs. champions with Hallowicked as Grand Champion (NRG (Race Jaxon/Hype Rockwell) as Tag Team Champions and Lovelace as Young Lions Cup holder. Lovelace is usually part of Dasher's Dugout (a sports themed team with Dasher wearing a baseball mask and Angelosetti being named Mr. Touchdown). KimberLee is a princess with purple hair.

Icarus and Hallowicked (former champion vs. the champion) start things off but it's off to Lovelace before anything happens. Icarus isn't clear what to do here so he wrestles slowly as they trade arm holds. Neither can hit a kick so Lovelace clotheslines him down and they slap hands before tagging out to Jaxon and Hatfield. Dasher grabs an armbar to slow Jaxon down before it's off to Mark for a bulldog.

The much bigger Rockwell comes in to trade shoulders with Angelosetti with Mark getting the better of it. We stop for some Tebowing (with the announcers wondering if that's still a thing) until NRG takes Mark down. That goes nowhere so here's the Princess vs. Hallowicked for a big showdown. The Princess actually gets the best of it and kicks Hallowicked down for two. NRG tries to interfere again but gets caught by Dasher and Mark with a double headbutt to keep the good guys in control.

KimberLee puts Race in a full nelson with her legs until Jaxon springboards out of the corner for the tag off to Rockwell. Everything breaks down for a bit and Hallowicked throws Heidi to the floor to prevent a showdown with the Princess for some reason. Go To Sleepy Hollow (a GTS with a kick instead of a knee) gets two on KimberLee before it's back to Race for two off a butterfly suplex. Hallowicked comes in and cranks on KimberLee's arm before it's off to Heidi for a chinlock. Hallowicked: "SHE IS OUR ENEMY! WHAT DO WE DO TO OUR ENEMY???"

A crucifix into something like Rings of Saturn has the Princess in trouble until she rolls out. Heidi and Hallowicked argue on the floor until KimberLee dives through the ropes to take them down. That means it's off to Icarus for a bad looking hurricanrana on Rockwell as things speed way up. Dasher comes in with no tag for a wheelbarrow slam/Stunner combo (the Bo Jackson) on Race.

Jaxon gets caught in the corner for a double superplex until Rockwell makes the save by powerbombing Dasher and Mark off the top. Race moonsaults onto both of them and it's off to KimberLee for some chops to NRG. The two of them are taken out with ease and NOW we get KimberLee vs. Lovelace. They kick it out because this is an indy promotion and we have to do it at some point.

KimberLee gets the better of it until a wicked Saito suplex sends her to the floor. Hallowicked comes in and decks Icarus before telling Heidi to get out. Lovelace says no so Hallowicked shoves her down allowing Icarus to beat up Hallowicked with strikes and a nice Sliced Bread #2. It's time for the parade of finishers, including Heidi apologizing to Dasher for a Fameasser. A pop up Diamond Cutter seemed to hurt Heidi but here's Eddie Kingston for the backfist to drop Hallowicked, allowing KimberLee to score the pin at 20:15.

Rating: B+. This was a lot of fun with all eight of them flying all over the place. This place is similar to Lucha Underground as the women are on equal footing with the men, making for a much more entertaining match instead of the stupid "let's treat them differently" nonsense that you often have to see. KimberLee getting the pin is a good choice instead of the normal stuff where it's the main World Champion contender getting the pin. This was by far and away the match of the night and a lot of fun with all eight looking awesome.

The credits roll and Alex thanks us for coming out, but here's Bryce Remsburg to say ONE MORE MATCH.

Fire Ant vs. Oleg the Usurper

Oleg is a viking who was frozen in ice and is rapidly turning face. Fire Ant is the high flier of the former Colony and a fan favorite. Ant dives through the ropes to take him out and fires (see what I did there?) off strikes inside. A boot to the face puts Ant down though and Oleg SMACKS him in the side of the head for the pin at 1:23. Well it was just an encore.

Pearlman thanks us for coming to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a show where there's a lot more to the show than just the wrestling. Chikara is much more about a fun show that is built up over time instead of a single show. That being said, this was a lot of fun and more than worth the money. It's definitely a show that you can get into more if you watch regularly but as a one off, this was a lot of fun and a really entertaining night.

The main event blows away everything else but nothing was bad and it was a really fun atmosphere all night long. It felt like the wrestlers were having a good time entertaining the fans and it showed in their performances. It's a really fun company if you want a legitimate alternative to WWE, which is often the case in name only.

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