

# GCW For The Culture 2024: As Always

## For The Culture 2024

Date: April 5, 2024

Location: Penns Landing Caterers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Big Swole, AC Mack

This has become a tradition from GCW over Wrestlemania Weekend and the shows tend to be pretty good more often than not. The show focuses on Black wrestlers and there is quite a bit of talent on the card. GCW can do rather well when they try and hopefully that is the case again here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Team Myron vs. Team Dolla

Myron: Myron Reed, Ruckus, Devon Monroe, Darian Bengston, Calvin Tankman

Dolla: AJ Francis, Isaiah Broner, Keita, Mr. Danger, Terry Yaki

Francis yells at Reed to start with Reed not being able to do the test of strength. Instead Reed hits him in the face but gets taken down with a single shoulder. Tankman comes in for the rather large lockup with Francis taking him into into the corner but missing the big chop. Back up and Tankman hits something like a Pounce to send Francis into the corner. It's off to Monroe for a bouncing hurricanrana to send Broner outside.

Keita comes in and kicks Monroe into the corner for a suplex right back out of it. It's off to Bengston to take Keita down by the arm but Danger comes in with a springboard moonsault. Francis cleans house and everything breaks down, as you probably expected it to do. We get back to back stereo dives

to leave almost everyone down.

That leaves Francis to tease a dive, only to flip the fans off instead. Danger busts out a big springboard corkscrew moonsault and NOW Francis busts out the big dive. Back in and we get the parade of big knockdowns until a hanging F5 hits Broner, followed by a sitout powerbomb from Ruckus to give Reed...the pin (it wasn't quite clear) at 11:48.

**Rating:** C+. The problem here is there were so many wrestlers in there at once that it was hard to keep track of what was going on. It doesn't help that they had so much going all over the place, with no one really getting to stand out. Francis was the biggest name in the whole thing and was only featured part of the time. Fun enough match, but not exactly focused.

Thick N Juicy vs. Kings Of The District vs. Killionaires Club vs. The Mane Event

That would be Brooke Valentine/Faye Jackson vs. Eel O'Neal/Jordan Blade vs. J Boujii/PB Smooth vs. Duke Davis/Ganon Jones Jr. Hold on though as we need to see if Jackson will give Smooth (a 6'9 giant) a Stinkface. That won't be happening so it's Blade starting with Valentine instead. Blade snapmares her down for a dropkick to the back before it's off to the test of strength.

That goes nowhere so they trade running shoulders to limited avail. A double knockdown gives us a double tag to O'Neal and Jackson, with O'Neal's headlock not getting him anywhere. Jackson runs him over with a shoulder and sits on his chest for two and O'Neal, dubbed Bad Brain, goes into the wrong corner in a not so bright move. Thick N Juicy hit running hip attacks on the Kings, who seem to approve. Stereo Cannonballs crush the Kings again but the Club comes in to clear the ring.

We get the big Club vs. Event showdown, with Boujii not being able to do much against the rather large Duke. Almost everyone heads to the floor, allowing Jones to hit a big dive onto the

pile. Back in and Blade manages a German suplex on Jones but the Kings Club clears the ring again. O'Neal strikes away at Jones to limited success. Jackson goes up (taking over a minute due to a bunch of slipping) and dives onto almost everyone else, setting up a Banzai Drop to pin O'Neal at 12:45.

**Rating:** C+. This was a bit easier to keep track of than the opener, though that might have been due to having four teams instead of two. There were some short form showdowns in there and that helped a bit, though again there is only so much you can get out of a match with eight people involved at once. Thick N Juicy were the focal point here, which is impressive given a giant like Smooth being involved.

#### Man Like DeReiss vs. Sonny Kiss

Kiss grabs the wristlock to start and flips around to start to slip away. Some hip shaking has DeReiss out on the floor but he comes back in for some dancing of his own. Back in and Kiss does Naomi's headscissors to ram him into the back of the trunks, only for DeReiss to hit a hard shoulder.

DeReiss works on the arm until Kiss flips out of a belly to back suplex and strikes away. A German suplex and a hard clothesline give DeReiss two and they trade rollups for two each. Natural Selection gives Kiss two but DeReiss is back with a sitout powerbomb for another near fall. Kiss gets up and manages a gorilla press (that's impressive) into a torture rack Stunner for the pin at 9:03.

**Rating:** C. While it was rather nice to have a singles match and both of them have a good bit of charisma, the action was nothing special. It was mainly a power vs. speed match, though Kiss' gorilla press at the end was quite the surprise. Perfectly fine match, but nothing that stood out much for what is supposed to be a special show.

#### Janai Kai vs. Jada Stone vs. Joseline Navarro vs. Maya World

## vs. Mazzerati vs. Tiara James

Elimination rules...or not actually as the ring announcer says there is a change of plans, making this one fall to a finish. It's a brawl to start with Maya, Mazzerati and Stone hitting stereo dropkicks to the floor. Maya and Mazzerati hit dives, followed by Stone's corkscrew moonsault onto the pile.

Back in and Stone strikes away on Maya until a German suplex drops Stone for two. Mazzerati comes in and gets kicked in the head and hits a sliding clothesline to the back of the head. Navarro avoids a charge in the corner and hits a basement DDT to put Mazzerati down. James comes back in and gets kicked in the face but catches a returning Kai with a gutbuster.

Everyone gets together for a suplex attempt, with Mazzerati, Maya and Stone managing to get the others over. Mazzerati goes for covers on a bunch of people but can't get anywhere. Well she can get to two but that's it. Everyone is back up Mazzerati hits a hurricanrana to send Kai into everyone else. We hit the parade of suplexes and throws until Navarro hits a running crossbody in the corner to pin Mazzerati at 10:32.

**Rating:** C+. Much like the first two matches, there was so much going on here with so many people that you can only get so much out of it. No one had a chance to stand out and it felt like who managed to get a pin first rather than whoever won. That's the problem with these scramble matches and it was on full display again here.

## 2 Cold Scorpio vs. Jah-C

They shake hands to start and fight over arm control, with Jah-C powering out of a top wristlock. We get a standoff, allowing Jah-C to yell at a woman in the crowd, which seems to be a bit of an overreaction. They go to the mat with Scorpio grabbing a front facelock, which is reversed into an armbar. Jah-C takes him down and seems to tell Scorpio to bring it, which works for him. An armdrag puts Jah-C down before Scorpio

lures him into a fake handshake.

Scorpio kicks him down and grabs the chinlock, which doesn't last long. They slug it out until Scorpio leverages him outside without too much effort. Back in and Scorpio kicks him down, setting up a springboard moonsault for two. Jah-C rakes the eyes though and hits his own springboard moonsault for his own two. Scorpio drops him and busts out the Tumbleweed for another near fall but Jah-C kicks him down again. A Lionsault gives Jah-C and a superkick finishes Scorpio off at 10:43, with Scorpio kicking out at 3.1 in a bit of a weird look.

**Rating:** C+. I'm always going to be interested in seeing Scorpio as I've been a fan for over thirty years. The guy has such a natural charisma and while he can't quite go like he used to (as he's 58), he still has enough ability to put on a good match. I'm curious about that ending though, as it definitely did not seem to go as it was supposed to.

Post match Scorpio gets to dance a bit.

Pan-Afrikan World Diaspora Wrestling Title: Suge D vs. Alex Kane

Kane is challenging and has Faye Jackson with him. The much bigger Kane blocks a whip into the ropes to start and Suge realizes he needs to do something else. Suge hits about ten straight running shoulders but can't get anywhere, so he stomps on the foot and then runs Kane over. Back up and Kane shrugs off a shot to the face and grabs a German suplex. Kane fires off some knees to the head but Suge is back with a facebuster for two.

That just annoys Kane again as he ties Suge in the ropes for a running boot to the face and two of his own. Some rolling German suplexes set up a t-bone suplex to send Suge into the corner but Suge talks trash as he comes out. Some running clotheslines and forearms stagger Kane and Suge grabs his own German suplex. They trade more suplexes until Suge gets two

but Kane is back up with a Crash Landing. A spear gives Kane two but Suge hits his own, setting up a piledriver to retain at 12:07.

**Rating:** C+. Suge seems to be more of the scrappy brawler while Kane is there to throw suplexes. It turned into a hard hitting fight and that helped a good bit, making it perhaps the best match on the show so far. Kane is a bigger deal in MLW so he has some status here, which made him feel like a stronger threat to take the title. Nice match here.

### Darius Carter vs. Billy Dixon

Darius Lockhart is the guest referee. Commentary says this is five years in the making though doesn't exactly explain how we got here. Carter shoves him to start and gets pummeled out to the floor, where Carter manages a quick posting. Back in and Dixon kicks away, setting up a middle rope elbow to the face for one. Carter's dropkick puts Dixon down again though and the pace slows a lot.

Carter starts going after the leg and grabs a Hartbreaker, despite Lockhart's protests. The Figure Four goes on back inside but Dixon makes the ropes in a hurry. That's fine with Carter, who takes it to the apron for a piledriver, which is countered into a backdrop. Back in and Carter starts in on the finger so he can stomp away in the corner. For some reason Lockhart helps Dixon up and tells him to fight back, which is exactly what Dixon does. The comeback doesn't last long as Carter knocks him outside but Dixon beats the count.

Carter hammers away at the forehead but Dixon runs him over with a shoulder. Dixon sits up ala Undertaker and gets two off a middle rope Thesz press. Another shot drops Dixon but Carter stops to yell at Lockhart, allowing Dixon to grab a Pedigree for two. Carter picks the leg again though and we hit the Figure Four again. Dixon fights up but gets his fingers snapped to put him back down...and he passes out for the pin at

19:14.

**Rating:** C. This is a match where commentary really hurt things, as it felt like it was supposed to be this big grudge match and we were never given any reason why. Was there some significance to the Figure Four? Or why do Lockhart and Carter not like each other? This was the main event and something treated as bigger than the rest of the show but you would never guess it based on most of the presentation.

**Overall Rating:** C-. For The Culture has been hit and miss over the years and this was on the latter side. The biggest problem here was a focus on quantity over quality, with three of the seven matches being multi-person messes in one form or another. The main event, while not bad, didn't feel overly important and that hurt things even more. On top of that, the show didn't start until around midnight so the main event was starting around 2:30 in the morning. Overall, this wasn't a great show and it needed to be laid out a good bit better to really improve.

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# Urban Wrestling Federation – First Blood: I Actually Understood This

## First Blood

Date: June 26, 2011

Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Julius Smokes, Shawn Credle, Robby Mireno

I remember hearing about this promotion when it first came out and wrote it off as a bad dream I had after watching too many old New Jack matches. This is the Urban Wrestling Federation and it's a mixture of hip hop music (I'm a rock guy so this is already WAY out of my comfort zone) and wrestling (now we're talking). This promotion only ran like five shows and for reasons of general annoyance, someone requested I look at their first offering. Let's get to it.

A reporter for some hip hop site reports on a rapper being arrested for fighting with a wrestler.

Opening sequence. I can already tell that I'm in trouble.

Some people are in...I think an alley, with one of them saying the ring is the new block. Apparently the two larger guys are going to pick up a bunch of people who may be either rappers or wrestlers.

Larry Legend (I believe the host) says the UWF is in the house. How do we get them out of the house?

Here's someone named Low Life Louie Ramos with something to say. Apparently he's part of Uncle Murda's (the rapper arrested earlier) crew and calls out someone who sneaks in from the back and hits him with a chair. The announcers aren't helping any here as they're talking about



that being the chair shot from Atlanta instead of saying who these people are or why they're fighting.

Louie is busted open and whoever this is (possibly named Murder-1) pulls out a sharp object to stab him in the head. A big boot and cutter leave Louie laying as the announcers talk over Murder-1's promo, consisting of him calling out Uncle Murda because his crew is tougher. Cue a Grim Reefer, Big Block and Ruckus to stand next to the guy in the ring (again, not sure what his name is) and apparently praise him.

Now it's Uncle Murda (Wasn't he in jail?), EC Negro and KC Blade (no idea who ANY of these people are but the announcers seem to think I should) and after Murda praises New York City several times, here are Brisco, Dope and Creed. One of them (Does it matter who?) talks about how he was sleeping with Reefer/Block and Ruckus' women over Memorial Day weekend, of course using some incredibly adult language in the process. Then the bell rings and we have a match. It's better than hearing these people talk any longer.

## 2-Dope/Creed vs. EC Negro/KC Blade vs. Grim Reefer/Ruckus

I had to look up who was teaming with who and who these people were online because again, the announcers aren't telling us a thing. Apparently Ruckus (who I've at least heard of) snaps off a headscissors on Creed but Dope jumps him from behind. As you might expect, there's no actual tagging or really anything resembling wrestling going on here. Blade (thanks announcers) plants Dope with a powerslam but here's Reefer to chop him, which the announcers describe as "treating him like a prostitute." Other announcer: "That's a crazy white boy right there."

Creed comes back in to beat on Negro as we're told this is about representing your turf and crew. A Creed dive takes out a bunch of people and Reefer follows with a big flip dive, which the announcer compares to the sound of a Beretta. Everyone is down on the floor as we're told that falls count anywhere. Thanks for bringing that up three and a half minutes in.

Reefer puts Negro in a Crossface but Blade makes a save. An elevated Stunner plants Reefer but Dope comes in before there's a cover. Uncle

Murda grabs a mic and shouts LET'S GO NEW YORK over and over. Dope clotheslines Ruckus to the floor as the announcers try to name the teams.

Creed and Dope (The Ghetto Mafia. Normally I would edit that into the title but I want you to understand how random all this information is coming in.) double team Reefer until Negro and Blade come in with a double piledriver (one over the shoulder and the other a regular one, basically sandwiching Reefer in the middle). Unfortunately they stop to pose too much though, allowing Creed to steal the pin on Reefer at 6:50.

**Rating:** D. There were some good looking double team moves here but there's no hiding the fact that this is going to be a mess. I still have no idea who these people are, why they're fighting, who I'm supposed to cheer for or really anything about the promotion other than they're all here for money. That's good enough for motivation I guess but

The winners go through the curtain and swear about New York a lot.

Another rapper and his wrestling cronies (perhaps the S.A.T.'s who you might remember from TNA's early days) say they're here to take over but now he's tired of talking to us.

More rappers are in a limo and the one on the left gives the other an envelope presumably containing cash. In exchange, he wants the rapper from the previous segment taken out. Oh and he wants the UWF Title because it means more money.

We get our third straight segment of people talking, one of them wearing a Cleveland Indians hat and instantly becoming my favorite. He asks one of them for his money because it's his girlfriend's shopping money. The guy, referred to as amigo, doesn't have it and the Indians guy isn't happy. Amigo has an hour to get the money to him, even though there's less than forty minutes left in the show.

EVEN MORE UNNAMED PEOPLE are here to take over. Would some name graphics kill them? They're also from some other town and hate New York. Oh one of them is Big Block from earlier. That's so insightful.

Someone, perhaps Murder-1, yells at Blade and Negro for losing, which

doesn't play in New York. He wants the title too and doesn't like the rapper with the S.A.T.'s, who may be named Red Cap. Oh and something about wanting money. I think we've established that by this point.

A guy is on the phone and talking about wanting the title when someone shows up and knees him in the head. ANOTHER GUY comes up and walks over him to go into his dressing room, where yet another unnamed person is going through the walk overer's bag.

The announcer is in the ring when the people from the locker room (Facade, the walk overer, and Bestia, the guy who was caught going through the bag) fight through the entrance with Facade backdropping him onto a ladder. Apparently they're trying to impress the bosses to get a spot in the UWF Title tournament. So that's a thing too. Oh hey a bell.

### Bestia vs. Facade

Facade armdrags him down as the announcers praise his braided hair. A kick to the head (possibly called Ultimate Toejam) gets two on Bestia as we're told this is about representing your city, which I think is what the whole promotion is about. Bestia comes back with a kick to the face and a front flip legdrop as the announcers talk about someone named Billy Blue, who sounds like the promotion's boss. Facade is dropped throat first across the barricade, which is compared to Ali-Frazier.

A table is set up but Bestia hits Facade with a chair. Announcer: "That's it! Paralyze him!" Facade missile dropkicks a chair into Bestia's face for two with the announcers saying it would have been a pin in PG wrestling. A botched springboard bulldog plants Bestia with Facade yelling at the referee. Announcer (none of them have been named on screen): "Go to Wendy's and McDonald's for that beef!" Something like a hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb through the table on the floor to give Bestia the fluke pin at 6:07.

**Rating:** D. This was your run of the mill indy match with two guys doing flips and using weapons for no particular rhyme or reason until one person won. The whole thing with the bag in the back was ignored (or more likely never seen by the announcers) for the sake of more turf wars, which aren't interesting and make no sense unless you have some kind of

prior knowledge of this.

Billy Blue (Indians guy) and company come out and have the wrestlers thrown inside. Blue wants some applause for Bestia, who apparently is the guy who owed him money earlier on. All of Blue's guys beat Bestia down as a "reward". Blue calls them off because Bestia won and they carry him to the back because he's part of the team.

We get a two second shot of the announcers to find out their names.

More people, again not named but one of them looks like a low rent Paul Heyman, say someone is late when a phone rings. It seems to be Red Cap, who will be delayed for reasons that aren't explained. The Heyman guy seems to be running the place and hands the phone to the other guy (Mel), who wants to know what's good. The camera pans over to show a bunch of people sitting at a table listening to this as Mel talks about buying a yacht. Heyman gets on the phone again and hands it to one of the people at the table, who happens to be Eddie Kingston. Red tells Eddie and the rest of the people to go with Mel.

Hey look: more people talking about turf and arguing.

Homicide says he gets more money and women than Eddie Kingston.

Mel tells Kingston that this is about the title and the money so go beat up Homicide.

### Eddie Kingston vs. Homicide

Mel and Uncle Murda are at ringside. Homicide gets knocked to the floor to start but comes back with a flip dive off the apron. They chop it out until Homicide pokes him in the eye and kicks him in the face. Choking and yelling at the rapping managers (close enough) ensues. Eddie gets in a gordbuster and some face ripping, followed by a waistlock of all things. Homicide escapes and goes outside to take the barricade apart.

That goes nowhere so Homicide suplexes him and drops a top rope headbutt for two. A neckbreaker lets the announcers take another shot at WWE because Homicide was REALLY trying to break Eddie's neck. Eddie comes back with a sliding lariat for two but Homicide hits a quick super cutter

and Vertebreaker (Cop Killer) for the pin at 10:55.

**Rating:** D+. Match of the night by about ten thousand miles, possibly because they're the only people I've seen before. It also helps that they were actually focusing on the wrestling instead of the rapping and turf wars. I mean, it wasn't particularly GOOD wrestling but I'll take this over whatever messes I had to sit through in the first two matches.

People, outside, yelling, something about Red Cap (which may be Red Cafe), something about Uncle Murda and Brooklyn, that's about it.

Kingston is in pain but promises that he's not done with Homicide.

Now we go outside in the dark to see (kind of) three people talking about making money and Uncle Murda. A deal is made.

Bestia was beaten up by his own crew because he didn't have Billy Blue's money...and that's it because the camera cuts away.

More people yell about turf and a drug deal might go down. This turns into a beating and someone is put into the trunk of a car. Someone (perhaps Creed or Dope from earlier) is beaten down and thrown into the trunk as well.

Two people talk to three other people and one of the three has a gun. The two run away and get into a car which speeds away. The three shoot at them to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D-. No I'm not failing it and the only reason is because it was shot well. The production values were actually strong here but I think you can understand everything else wrong here. I think I have a vague idea of what I was watching but if you're not a big fan of rap/hip hop culture, you're going to be incredibly lost.

Basically it's a bunch of people from different cities fighting for money, power and eventually the UWF Title but I only figured that out by looking up a lot about this place while watching the show. This is the definition of someone getting some money and thinking a horrible idea might be entertaining. There's really no reason for this to be a wrestling promotion and it clearly had a shelf life of about a day. I

didn't even hate the show. Instead I just wanted it to end, which is even worse when you think about it.

The promotion only ran five shows that I can find and honestly I'm stunned they lasted that long. This came off as stupid, catering to a fairly niche market and was basically a movie which had wrestling included. I get that there might be people who like this but I'm certainly not one of them. Bad show here and I'm stunned it lasted as long as it did.

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## **Wrestler of the Day – October 10: Zema Ion**

Today is a guy who has potential if he's used right: Zema Ion.

Ion got his start back in 2004 but we'll pick things up at the Super Indy VI tournament on May 11, 2007 with Ion wrestling under the name Shiima Xion.

Super Indy Quarterfinals: Ruckus vs. Shiima Xion

They trade wristlocks to start until Ruckus backflips into a

headscissors. Ion comes right back with a hurricanrana and armdrag of his own to take over. Ruckus kicks him to the floor but gets slammed onto the concrete. Ion loads up another one but Ruckus slips down the back and posts Ion instead. Ruckus gets nailed in the face and nailed with a shooting star off the apron.

Back in and Ruckus flips a lot with a kick to the face getting two. He hooks Ion in a sunset flip but reaches down to grab Ion's neck for kind of a reverse Crossface. Zema blocks a handspring elbow with a knee to the back but walks into a front flip neckbreaker. Ruckus misses a moonsault legdrop to give Ion two but a Phillipino Destroyer (a kind of reverse Dirty Deeds) for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. One guy did some moves, another guy did some moves, Ion beat him with a stupid looking move. This was the definition of the indy style that I really don't care for: there's no psychology or flow to the match and it's just doing moves for the sake of doing moves. That gets old fast but thankfully it wasn't that long of a match.

We'll jump ahead to TNA now, starting with Destination X 2011.

Austin Aries vs. Low Ki vs. Zema Ion vs. Jack Evans

Winner gets a contract. Christy of course messes up something, in this case Aries' entrance. We get some clips of their qualifying matches during each guy's entrance. Winner gets a contract of course. No tagging here thank goodness. Aries gets a quick two count on Ion as the fans chant "everybody." Aries and Low Ki (Kaval for the uneducated) square off and Evans starts flipping.

Spin kick by Evans gets two on Ion. Low Ki takes over again and hammers on Evans in the corner. Aries takes Low Ki down and uses some Hogan in late 90s offense for some reason. He beats up everyone but takes a triple dropkick to send him down. Evans starts flipping again and hits a dropsault to get two on Ion. Ion gets his turn to be on offense and gets a bunch of two counts.

Aries takes Ion down and has another showdown with Low Ki. After getting attacked they both throw submissions on the guys that jumped

them. They manage to yell insults at each other while they have the holds. Ok that was cool. With the others outside they argue again and chop it out. Aries loads up the brainbuster but Low Ki escapes and gets a big kick to Aries' back. Evans and Ion are back in now and Ion gets a knee to Evans' face for two. Pendulum elbow gets two for Aries.

Ion clears the ring and takes over but Aries stops a dive. Aries tries a suicide dive but Low Ki gets a fast kick up to send him flying backwards. Evans comes in and flips a lot but spins around too much as Aries takes him down with a spinning forearm. The fans chant sign them all. Ion and Aries are the only ones up right now. Aries gets a neckbreaker on the rope to put Ion down. Low Ki gets a cartwheel into a kick to knock Aries off the top and also get two.

Evans blocks a Warrior's Way to Aries with a rana, getting two. He calls for the 630 but Ion breaks it up. Ion hits the 450 on Low Ki but Aries makes the save. Using the distraction, Evans fires off the 630 but eats knees. Aries hammers on Evans and hits the brainbuster on Low Ki to win the contract. Probably the best choice.

**Rating:** B. Can't really complain here as this was what the X-Division was built on. The fans got their flips and probably the best possible outcome here with Aries arguably being the best guy here. I'd expect to see all of them again in the future which is probably the best thing, especially with how weak the division has been lately. Fun match.

Ion would be back in TNA for Genesis 2012.

X-Division Title: Zema Ion vs. Kid Kash vs. Austin Aries vs. Jesse Sorensen

I didn't know this but it's elimination rules. The fans seem to like Jesse the most. Aries chills on the floor to start and Sorensen cleans house. A northern lights gets two on Ion and Aries comes in. This is one of those matches where there's no point in trying to keep track of everything that's going on. Kash and Aries are sent to the floor and after Ion is put up top it's the Tower of Doom! That hasn't been used in awhile.



Aries goes up top but Ion shoves him down to the floor onto Kash. Ion hits a big corkscrew plancha to the floor to take the two of them out. Sorensen of course follows in the customary series of dives. Still gets a great reaction from the crowd too. Jesse gets two on Aries back inside. Ion gets sent into the corner so Kash tries a superplex, but Aries is whipped into the corner to send Kash crashing. Ion stands up and hits the 450 on Kash to put him out first.

Aries busts out the 450 on Sorensen for just two. The fans are WAY behind Jesse here. Top rope cross body gets two on Aries. A suplex into a cutter kind of move gets the same as Ion breaks up the pin because he's an idiot. Ion goes after Jesse but walks into a small package for the second elimination to get us down to one on one. Aries rolls up Sorensen but Ion has the referee.

Brainbuster is countered into the Game Changer (Test Drive into a DDT) but Ion's distraction keeps it at just two. Aries breaks up something off the top but runs into a boot in the corner. Ion is ducked out of sight on the floor. Sorensen goes up but Ion crotches him, letting Aries dropkick him and a middle rope brainbuster keeps the title on Aries 10:59.

**Rating:** C+. I was really liking this until the ending. Sorensen has been built up for awhile now and the fans are clearly behind him, but they need to pull the trigger on him if they're going to. Restocking the division is a good idea, but if all the guys keep losing it's not really going to do them any good. The match was fun though and a high flying match to open the show is a tried and true idea.

Here's a double shot at Destination X 2012.

#### X-Division Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Zema Ion vs. Flip Cassanova

Ion stares down Sorensen as he comes through the curtain. That could be an incredible moment when they have their match. Hopefully this match is short though as Cassanova was downright dangerous on Impact. Ion kicks him in the head to start and clotheslines Flip down. Ion misses a clothesline and Cassanova sends him to the floor, followed by a flip dive.

That gets Cassanova nowhere so Ion pounds him right back down. Cassanova gets sent to the floor for a baseball slide to send him down again. Back in and Flip kicks Ion down and hits a namesake moonsault for two. The flip dive that he won with on Impact misses here and Ion ends this with a modified Gory Bomb.

**Rating:** D+. This was just a step above a squash. Now hopefully we never see Cassanova and his dangerous self for a LONG time. He didn't have the chance to screw much stuff here and for the sake of Ion, that's a very good thing. Ion looked decent here, which is about how he's looked the entire time he's been around: not bad but nothing great.

And the second match that night.

X-Division Title: Mason Andrews vs. Kenny King vs. Sonjay Dutt vs. Zema Ion

It's Ultimate X and the title is vacant coming in. Ion puts in some hairspray and goes for a quick win, only to be brought down just as quickly. He runs to the corner but dives at the three guys instead. That goes just as badly as Ion dives into three dropkicks at the same time. Things start speeding up and Dutt is the only one left. He goes up but King breaks it up. Ion breaks up the breaking up and it's Andrews vs. Ion at the moment.

King comes back in and counters an Andrews DDT by suplexing him into Ion who was in the Tree of Woe. King and Dutt slug it out on the apron and a cartwheel kick knocks Dutt to the floor. Kenny goes for the belt but Dutt takes him down with a springboard dropkick. Dutt fires off a standing shooting star but hits his arm on the rope in the process. Keep that in mind. Ion makes a run for the belt but Andrews and King make the save. The two saviors go to the corner and Andrews suplexes King down.

Dutt is being taken out of the match because of his arm/elbow/shoulder. Ion goes for the belt but gets brought down into an atomic drop from Andrews. King and Ion go to the floor with Andrews hitting a flip dive over the top to take both guys down. Andrews goes for the title but King hits a springboard spear to take him down in a good looking spot.

Here's Dutt again, after having his arm/elbow/shoulder being popped back into place. King and Andrews go for the belt but they knock each other down. Ion and Dutt go up top onto the structure which makes my fear of heights cringe. They slug it out up there and slip down onto the cables, but Ion sprays Sonjay with the hairspray. That knocks Dutt down and Ion wins the title.

**Rating:** B-. This was pretty good and I can live with Ion as the champion. Unfortunately his main feud is going to be months away as Sorensen isn't going to be ready for a long time. As for now that, he's ok I guess but King probably would have been the best choice. Still though, decent match and a solid performance from Dutt as he worked through injury. That's probably the first feud too, which should be good.

Time for a title defense at Hardcore Justice 2012.

#### X-Division Title: Kenny King vs. Zema Ion

King is challenging. Feeling out process to start with King finally taking over with a headlock. A backslide gets two as does La Majistral. Back to the headlock and then out to the floor with King hitting a sweet flip dive off the apron. They head back inside for a second but King is knocked back outside where the champ hits a flip dive of his own. Ion hits a neckbreaker for two and it's off to a chinlock.

That only lasts a few seconds as Ion chokes instead. Now we get a longer lasting chinlock followed by a DDT for two. King comes back with an atomic drop and things speed up a bit. A high collar throw puts Ion into the corner and out to the floor. King hits a BIG corkscrew dive to the floor which gets two back in.

The modified F5 is broken up but King puts on a half crab of all things. A kick similar to Trouble in Paradise misses and a flipping backbreaker gets two for Ion. King hits a knee to the head for two and knocks the hairspray out of Ion's hand. They head to the corner and King sets for some kind of sunset flip but gets countered into something like a shoulderbreaker for the pin by Ion to retain at 11:03.

**Rating:** D+. Ion is really freaking boring. At the end of the day all he

has is big hair and that's nothing interesting at all. I get that they want to wait on Sorensen to come back and take the title from him in a big moment, but do we have to sit through him as champion that long? Nothing to see here and Ion winning was a letdown as he was shown up in this match.

Here's the opener from Bound For Glory 2012.

#### X-Division Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Zema Ion

Ion is defending and is obsessed with his hair. There's no story here because there wasn't time to get one together. Literally the Thursday before the show, Van Dam came out and said he was challenging for the title here. The fans are entirely behind Rob here as you would expect them to be. Feeling out process to start as Rob goes after Ion's hair to take over. A few kicks to the face send Zema outside but he's able to run away from Rob's dive.

Back in and Rob ducks a clothesline but gets caught by a low dropkick. The ring is very loud here. Something like a Whisper in the Wind gets two for the champion but he gets crotched on the ropes and kicked back out to the floor. Rob takes a well deserved bow as this has been mostly one sided so far. The champ comes back in by diving through the ropes into a tornado DDT for a pair of near falls.

Rob gets shoved off the top and down onto the barricade, setting up a big flip dive from Ion. Zema throws him back in and blocks a monkey flip with a kind of hot shot. A missile dropkick gets two on Rob and the champion puts on an abdominal stretch to slow things down. That goes nowhere so they slug it out until Rob throws him into the air for a dropkick to the ribs. Rolling Thunder sets up the Five Star for the clean pin and the title.

**Rating:** C+. I liked this more than I thought I would with Ion being a perfectly adequate foil for the feel good title win. Rob broke a bit of a sweat here but there wasn't a huge doubt as to who was winning. Ion had been champion for three months at this point and there wasn't much else he could do with it so giving it to Rob to make him look like he still means something is a good idea.

Zema was in the Ultimate X match at X-Travaganza.

### Zema Ion vs. Mason Andres vs. Rubix vs. Kenny King

In case you couldn't tell, this is Ultimate X. Tenay says this is "just the 29<sup>th</sup> time we've unleashed Ultimate X." Yep, just 29 in ten years. By comparison, there have been 14 TLC matches in 13 years. The idea here is there are two ropes crossing way above the ring, forming an X. At their intersection there's a big red X and whoever pulls that down wins. You have to use the ropes above the ring to pull yourself to the X to pull it down as the ropes are about seven feet above the top ropes of the ring.

Everything breaks down to start with Ion being sent to the floor. Rubix and Andrews go at it with Rubix taking him to the mat with an armdrag. King takes Rubix down with a sidekick but Ion is back in to take Kenny down as well. Andrews and Ion head down to the floor with King hitting a spinning springboard legdrop on Rubix back inside. Everyone is on the floor now as Taz keeps up his stupid jokes by calling Rubix Rubic like the cube.

Andrews and Ion are back inside with Mason going up, only to be pulled back down by Zema. Rubix comes back in with a sweet dropkick to Ion, sending him out to the floor. Rubix drops a slingshot legdrop on Andrews but Mason comes right back and pounds away on Ion in the corner. Ion slams Rubix down off the top as the match slows down a lot. King goes after Rubix's mask in the corner but Andrews suplexes him off the top to save Rubix's identity (which would be Jigsaw from Chikara).

Andrews stops Rubix from going for the X as Taz keeps the stupid running joke going. King dives out onto Rubix so Andrews dives down onto King to take both guys down. Ion hits a BIG corkscrew dive off the top onto Andrews and King to a rather weak reaction from the crowd. Rubix climbs up the structure in the corner to dive onto all three guys before heading back inside to go after the X.

It's Kenny making the save though by pulling Rubix down into the Royal Flush to send Rubix to the floor. Ion crotches King in the corner but Kenny sends Zema to the floor to break up a superplex. Andrews manages to

pull King down but Ion stops him from climbing across. Rubix comes back in and hits a dropkick on Ion and a tornado DDT on Andrews at the same time. Everyone is in a corner now and it's Andrews going up, only to be pulled down into a German suplex by Rubix.

Rubix goes to the corner, only to be shoved down by Ion. Rubix and King team up to stop Ion with Rubix sending Ion into the structure in the corner. A dropkick takes King down but Andrews drives a knee into Rubix's head. Ion and Andrews go across the ropes and meet in the middle above the ring with Andrews pulling Ion down in a Downward Spiral. In an anti-climactic ending, Rubix goes up and pulls down the X...but apparently he has to touch the mat. King catches him on the way down and steals the X to win.

**Rating:** B-. This was fun but the highspots were kind of lacking. It's definitely entertaining, but again this doesn't really mean anything and it was pretty clear that King or Ion was going to get the win. King stealing it was a nice touch but this was lacking the huge death defying nature of most of the Ultimate X matches.

Here's a triple threat match at Lockdown 2013.

X-Division Title: Kenny King vs. Christian York vs. Zema Ion

King is defending. York knocks the champion down to start before clotheslining Ion down as well. King goes to the floor to let the other guys fight, only to have York dive out onto him, ramming King into the barricade. Ion loads up a dive of his own but runs into a boot from York. King tries to use Ion's body as a springboard but slips off and rams his head into the guardrail in a SCARY looking landing. Ion dives on both York and King anyway before heading back inside with York.

Thankfully King is still alive and comes back in to break up a York cover before pounding away on Christian in the corner. Ion is down on the floor as York chops away at King, only to be poked in the eye. Zema comes back in with a quick rana off the top rope for two on York. A moonsault gets the same result and Ion is frustrated.

York hits a quick legdrop on King for two but Ion baseball slides King to

the floor. A slingshot into a DDT gets two on York for Ion as King gets back in. Ion is sent out to the entrance ramp where King drops a leg to keep him down. York pulls Ion back inside for two and all three men are back inside. King loads up a top rope fallaway slam on Ion, only to have York add a powerbomb to make it a Tower of Doom. Christian gets control by hammering away on all three guys, including a suplex on King for no cover.

The Mood Swing neckbreaker gets two on Ion for York and a Capo Kick sends King into the corner. In an interesting combo, York DDTs King as Ion neckbreakers York, with Zema getting two on both guys. York hits a top rope double stomp to Ion's back and a corner roll at King. Kenny comes back with a kick to Ion's head but York rolls through the Royal Flush for two. Not that it matters as another attempt at the Flush ends York to retain the title at 11:10.

**Rating:** C. This was good, but at the same time it came off much more like a collection of spots rather than a coherent match. I'm not wild on matches like that, especially when there are that many botches. The one with King at the beginning was scary with him slipping down and nearly breaking his neck in the process. That's scary stuff.

We'll jump ahead a bit to Ion cashing in his Feast or Fired briefcase for a shot at the X-Division title on Impact, February 6, 2014.

#### X-Division Title: Austin Aries vs. Zema Ion

Ion gets two early near falls before a baseball slide to the back puts Aries down again. Austin comes back with a chop but is sent into the barricade to put him down again. A slingshot DDT gets two on Aries but Ion misses a corkscrew moonsault, allowing Aries to hit a discus forearm and a release belly to back suplex. There's the running corner dropkick and a brainbuster retains Aries' title at 2:11.

Ion was in action at X-Travaganza II.

#### Ultimate X Qualifying Match: DJZ vs. Rashad Cameron

DJZ takes him into the corner but hides from the threat of a right hand.

Cameron gains control and cranks on a headlock, causing DJZ to yell about Cameron touching his hair. Naturally Rashad pulls him down by the hair before putting on DJZ's headset. He throws the headphones in the air for a distraction and chops DJZ down, only to have his dive attempt broken up. DJZ stomps in the corner and gets two off a flapjack.

We hit the chinlock and Tenay throws a big wrench into the whole concept of the night. Apparently these are NOT qualifying matches, at least not in the traditional sense. Only Cameron can qualify for whatever reason, meaning that if DJZ wins, both guys' night is done. The idea is current X-Division guys vs. outsiders and only the outsiders can qualify. So if the TNA roster wins in a sweep, there's no Ultimate X? How do they manage to screw up something this easy? Why do they need to make something this simple so complicated? Such is life in TNA.

Anyway, Cameron fights out of a chinlock but gets dropped ribs first onto the top rope. The fans chant DJ CHICKEN LEGS as DJZ misses a charge and falls out to the floor, setting up a big flip dive (Tenay's words) to take DJZ down again. Back in and a high cross body and hurricanrana get two each for Cameron. With DJZ hunched over, Cameron jumps backwards from the middle rope into a cutter. I've never liked that move. Cameron misses a top rope splash but comes back with a small package for the pin.

**Rating:** C. The match wasn't bad but DJZ really doesn't do anything for me in the ring. The story here though was how hard my mind was blown by the stipulations. Insiders vs. outsiders is a fine idea, but why in the world would you not just let the winners into Ultimate X? I don't see the benefit of having the active roster guys get nothing for a win, but to be fair there's a lot of stuff about TNA I don't get.

Slammiversary 2014 was held in Dallas so it's time for some Von Erichs.

#### Bro Mans vs. Ross Von Erich/Marshall Von Erich

Marshall wrestles barefoot like Kevin did. This is DJZ and Jesse for the team tonight. Marshall cleans house on DJZ to start but can't hook the Claw. A powerslam puts DJZ back down and it's off to the older Ross for some dropkicks. Jesse breaks up something off the top rope and DJZ hits a nice flip dive to take Ross down on the ramp.



Back in and Jesse nails a dropkick but Ross avoids a second one and makes the hot tag to Marshall. Everything breaks down and Ross hits a missile dropkick to put both guys down. Jesse brings in a chair but gets it dropkicked into his face, setting up a series of basic double team moves from the brothers. Not that it matters as DJZ brings in the chair for the DQ at 5:07.

**Rating:** D+. Well that was a waste of pay per view time. The Von Erichs looked ok at best but it's clear that they need ring time more than anything else. They didn't know how to finish a match yet and it looked like they needed to get through a bunch of spots instead of bringing the match to a close. Not terrible, but the ending really didn't work for me.

One more messy X-Division match on Impact, September 3, 2014.

Homicide vs. DJZ vs. Craazy Steve vs. Low Ki vs. Manik vs. Tigre Uno

Winner gets an X-Division Title shot at some point in the future and this is one fall to a finish. Low Ki hammers on Tigre to start before hitting a kind of spinebuster for two. A fisherman's suplex gets the same with all four other guys making the save. Off to Manik vs. Homicide with the masked man being sent into the ropes for a tag to DJZ.

Steve comes in with a sunset flip for two on DJZ before everything breaks down. DJZ and Steve are sent to the floor with Low Ki and Tigre being backdropped after them. Manik and Homicide trade some suplex attempts until Manik jumps into a cutter. The Gringo Killa gives Homicide the title shot at 4:32.

**Rating:** D+. Well that happened. There's no story, there's no psychology, there's absolutely nothing we haven't seen before. This division is such a disaster at this point as it's back to the old habit of some big multiman match to set up a one off title shot and then do it all over again. That gets really old really fast and we reached that point a long time ago.

Ion doesn't do much for me. He's a guy that's just kind of there with all of his flips and stereotypical X-Division style and that gets old after awhile. I like him FAR better as the annoying DJZ but the in ring work

just isn't there. He's much better suited for an indy company than a big one like TNA, but the DJZ character works fine.

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