

Cruiserweight Classic – August 24, 2016: A Surprise

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 24, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

We're wrapping up the second round tonight and after this show we'll have the final eight competitors. There are only three weeks left before the finale and it's hard to imagine that this isn't going to be around much longer. The wrestling has gotten even better as the tournament goes on, which really is amazing given where they started. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the tournament via a HHH voiceover as well as seeing the (really simple) trophy being unveiled.

Look back at last week's show.

Preview of tonight's three matches.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk about last week and tonight.

Lince Dorado is here because it's all he's ever wanted to do and he's a hybrid wrestler.

Rich Swann says wrestling saved his life.

Second Round: Lince Dorado vs. Rich Swann

Puerto Rico vs. USA here. The goofy Swann gets his traditional ALL NIGHT LONG chant to start us off. They start fast with some nice early near falls and neither guy being able to pull off a headscissors. Dorado keeps cutting off Rich's dancing so he can do an Alex Wright style dance.

Swann sends him outside and does some dancing of his own until a springboard missile dropkick knocks Rich outside as well. A HUGE dive

from Dorado takes Swann down again but he comes right back with a neckbreaker. That means more dancing before he lifts Dorado up for a suplex but kneels down and bends Dorado over his neck for a hold. That's certainly new.

Unfortunately it can't last long due to the laws of physics so it's time to strike it out. Dorado blocks a top rope hurricanrana and they hit bicycle kicks at the same time for a double knock down. Back up and Dorado gets in a few kicks to take over until Rich gets two off a DDT. The standing 450 only hits Dorado's raised knees and Swann is planted with a reverse hurricanrana. Lince misses his shooting star press though and Swann's Phoenix Splash lands on Dorado's face to send him to the final eight at 8:15.

Rating: C+. Swann is an NXT guy and almost guaranteed to make a run in this thing and the lighthearted character is starting to grow on me. Not everything needs to be this big serious moment so throwing a dancing guy who can wrestle so well in there helps a lot. Good enough match here but nothing compared to some of the other stuff they've done.

We look at Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa losing to the Revival at Takeover.

Gargano, with Ciampa next to him, says he doesn't want to lose again.

Drew Gulak likes to hurt people.

Zack Sabre Jr. knows how to wrestle and can escape anything.

Drew Gulak vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

USA vs. England. Gulak won't shake hands to start and tries to take it to the mat early on. Drew actually gets the better of it with a straitjacket choke, only to have Zack take him to the mat and crank on both arms at the same time. The more aggressive Gulak chops him in the corner and works on a double arm hold of his own. Sabre tells him to come on so Gulak slaps him in the face. Gulak's top rope clothesline is countered into a Fujiwara armbar but it's reversed into a Gory Special with Sabre's arms being bent so far backwards that they cross behind his back.

Sabre gets out and puts on an octopus hold which is quickly reversed into an ankle lock. Drew can't hang on to an electric chair so Sabre reverses into a Kimura with a bodyscissors. Gulak slams him down to escape until a penalty kick to the chest gets two for Zack. A slap to the face knocks Sabre silly but the dragon scissors is countered into rollup to pin Gulak at 8:28.

Rating: B. Now that's more like it as they were just countering everything and turning it into one hold after another until someone finally got caught. That's an important word as Gulak didn't so much get defeated as much as he got caught in the end. It's good to see Sabre get tested like this after looking so dominant in the first round. Good stuff here and really fun to watch.

Drew shakes hands after the match.

TJ Perkins is a high flier and one of the best in the world.

Johnny Gargano is one of the best in the world period and had a great match against Tommaso Ciampa to get to the second round.

Second Round: TJ Perkins vs. Johnny Gargano

Philippines vs. USA. They're playing up the idea that Gargano is four days removed from Takeover so he might not be 100% coming in. Perkins takes him to the mat to start and grabs a Muta Lock for a bit. Back up and Gargano sends TJ outside for a suicide dive but his knee is banged up again. Perkins comes right back with that rocking horse hold of his, followed by a surfboard for good measure.

Gargano gets out of a headscissors and spears Perkins through the ropes for no cover. A big sitout powerbomb plants Johnny and we get a BOTH THESE GUYS chant. They head outside with Johnny hitting a running flip dive but his leg crashing into a table. Back in and they slug it out even more with Perkins hitting a springboard dropkick to the face. A kneebar doesn't work as Gargano reverses into a modified crossface. Perkins is sent face first into the middle buckle with authority for two more and both guys are spent. TJ is smart enough to kick the leg out and roll into a kneebar for the submission at 12:18.

Rating: B. Now THAT is a surprise as Gargano was probably one of the major favorites to win this whole thing. I really like the storytelling here though as they set up the knee injury from a show that hadn't even taken place yet and tied it together here. Gargano giving up because of the knee makes sense and it made for a great story as a result. That kind of thing amazes me and they pulled it off really well here.

Here are the quarterfinal matchups:

Akira Tozawa

Gran Metalik

Zack Sabre Jr.

Noam Dar

Brian Kendrick

Kota Ibushi

TJ Perkins

Rich Swann

Overall Rating: B+. Another night of great wrestling with a huge surprise to wrap things up. Those last eight names should make for an amazing final three weeks and I'm really looking forward to whatever they have planned going forward. There's almost no way the next few rounds won't be great as this show has proven that they can pull off almost anything in the ring.

Results

Rich Swann b. Lince Dorado – Phoenix Splash

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Drew Gulak – Rollup

TJ Perkins b. Johnny Gargano – Kneebar

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Cruiserweight Classic – July 20, 2016: More Classic

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

It's week two and therefore time for more first round matches. Last week's show was entertaining stuff as they're going with a very different vibe this time around. It's rather cool to see a lot of the unknowns getting shots, even if a lot of them have almost no chance of winning the thing. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Mauro welcomes us to the show and congratulates Bryan on his new role in WWE, though no specific spot is mentioned.

Corey Graves introduces a recap of last week's show and introduces tonight's matches.

First Round: Tajiri vs. Damien Slater

Japan vs. Australia. Tajiri starts fast and sends Slater into the ropes as they're still feeling each other out in the early going. Slater kicks him in the ribs and Bryan is right there to say kicking with Tajiri is a bad idea. Instead they fight over some wristlocks with Tajiri hammering him down with some elbows.

More kicks sets up an armbar on Slater but he makes the ropes and sends Tajiri outside for a slingshot corkscrew dive. Back in and Tajiri grabs a wristlock to slow down Slater's offense. That's so simple but actually smart at the same time. I mean it didn't work but it was smart. A running knee to the head gets two for Slater. Tajiri gets in even more kicks and grabs a quick Tarantula, followed by the handspring elbow. The Buzzsaw Kick puts Slater away at 5:49.

Rating: C. Tajiri was one of my favorites in ECW and it's a good sign that he's basically the same wrestler that he was back in the day (albeit a bit slower). Sometimes it's easier to just kick someone in the head over and over. Slater wasn't the flashiest guy out there but he looked very confident in the basic stuff he was doing.

TJ Perkins is the wrestler who makes everything look good.

Da Mack wants to be the Michael Jackson of professional wrestling. Take that for what it's worth.

First Round: Da Mack vs. TJ Perkins

Germany vs. Philippines and both guys seem cocky. Mack's dancing draws an Alex Wright reference. Perkins takes him down with a dropkick and a headscissors with some dancing that Bryan (nor myself) can identify. Mack catches him with a palm strike but Perkins dances into a Boston crab with Perkins lifting him up by the arms. The threat of a Muta Lock (bridging Indian Deathlock with a chinlock) sends Mack over to the ropes and he's able to pull TJ to the floor.

Naturally that means a big flip dive, followed by some dancing stomps back inside. Now the Muta Lock has Mack in trouble but he's right in

front of the ropes. Mack is back up and runs the corner for a spinning kick to the face, only to have the landing delay the cover. Perkins is right back up with a slingshot dropkick but he misses a 450. Not that it matters as some kicks to the head set up a kneebar to make Mack tap at 6:30.

Rating: B-. They packed a lot into a short amount of time and it was a much different style than the first match. This was all about the high flying with some submission stuff thrown in for some flavor. Mack looked like almost any high flying indy name but Perkins looked like a much more versatile and polished wrestler. Not great but entertaining enough.

Mustafa Ali says he's the most well rounded wrestler in the tournament.

Lince Dorado, a masked man, talks about wrestling around the world and being ready to face anyone.

First Round: Mustafa Ali vs. Lince Dorado

Pakistan vs. Puerto Rico. Ali doesn't want to shake hands but eventually does so to get us going. Dorado headscissors him out to the floor but gets pulled outside as well, setting up a running knee from the apron. A knee to the back gets two on Dorado but he kicks Ali in the face. Dorado isn't done as he headscissors Ali to the floor, setting up the longest Asai Moonsault I've ever seen. Back in and a springboard reverse hurricanrana (it sounds better than it looks) gets two on Ali, who comes right back with a springboard Spanish Fly for the same. Ali misses a 450 though and a shooting star gives Dorado the pin at 5:53.

Rating: B+. Take two guys and let them fly all over the place for a few minutes. It worked back in WCW and it's still going to work today. This was easily the most entertaining thing so far with two guys who both got to show off a lot. I've seen Dorado before but Ali looked a lot better than I was expecting. Really fun match here and the kind I've been waiting for.

Akira Tozawa is excited to be here.

Kenneth Johnson thinks it's his time.

First Round: Akira Tozawa vs. Kenneth Johnson

Japan vs. USA. Again they fight over a wristlock to start until Johnson actually takes him to the mat and works on the leg. A headlock into a headscissors gives us a standoff. Tozawa, the heavy favorite coming in, finally starts getting serious and wins a chop off before just punching Johnson in the jaw.

Johnson takes a hard roaring elbow but comes right back with a dropkick for no cover. There's a double clothesline to put both guys down until Tozawa goes nuts with some forearms to the jaw. Johnson stops him cold with knees to the face and a jackknife cover for two. Kenneth misses a middle rope spinning legdrop though and Tozawa snaps off a hard German suplex for two, followed by a bridging German for the pin at 10:00.

Rating: B. Tozawa cranked it up in the end and looked like one of the favorites to win the whole thing. Johnson was the definition of a guy in tights but he held his own here against someone with a lot more experience and skill. There was even a good story here with Tozawa underestimating him and Johnson trying to make the most of it until he was overcome by all the skill and experience. The match was shockingly good and far better than the squash I was expecting.

Overall Rating: B+. The last two matches were definitely upgrades over the first two with two flashy, high flying cruiserweight styles matches which is more what I was looking for here. I do however like the multiple styles because they keep the thing from getting stale with the same stuff over and over. Mixing it up is always an appreciated touch and it made the show much more entertaining this week.

Results

Tajiri b. Damien Slater – Buzzsaw Kick

TJ Perkins b. Da Mack – Kneebar

Lince Dorado b. Mustafa Ali – Shooting Star Press

Akira Tozawa b. Kenneth Johnson – German suplex

Results

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Thought of the Day: How The Kayfabe Has Fallen

On Impact this last week, Hogan came out with TJ Perkins and said Perkins had always been Suicide. Why is this such a topic of discussion? It's well documented that Perkins hasn't always been the guy playing the character. TJ joined the roster earlier this year and Suicide was around like four or five years ago. However, nearly every post I've seen about this has said how stupid it is for Hogan to lie about it. This is where smarks crack me up. They claim to be so smart and knowledgeable that they miss the entire point of wrestling at times: it's all one big lie.

So often these are the same people that whine and complain about how bored they are with modern wrestling, yet when a character on a wrestling show does something different or old school like this, the “fans’ freak out about how stupid it is. Is Hogan telling the truth? No, but then again neither is almost anyone on the show when they say anything at all.

Here’s a little something for you all to chew on: isn’t it interesting that the two peaks of wrestling, the Golden Era of the 80s and the Attitude Era, were all about being as unrealistic as possible? It’s almost like the formula that made wrestling work in the first place (this is all fake and the fans are just along for the ride) never needed to be tweaked at all and when it does, the results are nowhere near as successful.

Then again that would mean that internet fans and smarks are mostly schnooks that have no idea what they’re talking about and are nowhere near as smart as they think they are and are actually bad for the business. That just couldn’t be true, could it?