

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 Six – This is What I Signed Up For

Mae Young Classic Episode #6

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's time to finish up the second round and get us down to the final eight. That means we have some big names facing some other big names on this show and that should be a lot of fun. I've managed to avoid as many spoilers as possible and it's amazing how much more entertaining a show like this can be when that's the case. Let's get to it.

We open with the standard recap of the previous show and tonight's preview.

Opening sequence.

We see Ronda Rousey and the Four Horsewomen arriving earlier. Gee I wonder who is making the finals.

Video on Toni Storm, who wants to fight and win.

Video on Lacey Evans, who is everything a modern woman is supposed to be.

Second Round: Toni Storm vs. Lacey Evans

They fight over a headlock to start with Toni getting the better of it. Lacey grabs one of her own with a fairly serious look on her face until a kick to the chest puts her down again. Storm tries a bit too flashy hip attack and gets rolled up for two for her efforts. A leg sweep from the apron into a slingshot elbow gives Lacey two and it's time to work on the

arm.

Storm goes back to the strikes to get a breather and it's a Backstabber (not a Codebreaker JR) to put Lacey down in the corner. Lacey comes back with a good looking swinging neckbreaker, only to walk into Strong Zero (modified White Noise onto the knee) to send Storm on at 5:08.

Rating: C-. I'm digging Storm (good look, strong enough work) so far as she's got a bit of a charisma that is helping her stand out. Hopefully she's sticking around for awhile as I could see her going somewhere with the right coaching. Evans' gimmick is kind of odd as she has the serious military background but looks like one of the Andrews Sisters in the ring. I liked her when I saw her live but it's not quite working this time.

Video on Mia Yim, who has been working specifically to be the best.

Video on Shayna Baszler, who has combat experience.

Second Round: Mia Yim vs. Shayna Baszler

Of note: Baszler, one of MMA's Four Horsewomen, walks past Charlotte, Becky Lynch and Bayley with only a passing glance. An exchange of kicks naturally goes to Baszler (JR: "Some people enjoy going to the mall. I think she'd go to the mall just to beat people up.") but Mia knocks her outside for a heck of a suicide dive. Back in and Baszler rolls some gutwrench suplexes for two but gets caught in the Tarantula (with JR calling Tajiri a handsome rascal).

An ankle lock cuts Mia off again but she's right back with some strikes to the face for two. Not that it matters as Baszler knees her hard in the face for a knockdown and it's right back to the ankle lock. Mia kicks her way to freedom and is able to powerbomb Baszler for two because ankle injuries aren't a thing. Just in case you thought it was a thing, Mia tries a 450 but gets caught in a rear naked choke for the tap at 5:36.

Rating: B-. Lack of selling aside, I'm sad to see Mia go out so early. For a long time I never got her appeal but she grew on me a lot during the tournament. That being said, Baszler is someone they're going to push

very hard in this thing due to the Four Horsewomen affiliation. It would surprise me if we didn't see a four on four match at Wrestlemania and that would be just fine.

Post match Shayna celebrates with her friends before going over to the wrestling Horsewomen to throw up the hand signs. Fans: "YES! YES! YES!"

Video on Dakota Kai, who is a fast striker. A striker? In a women's wrestling tournament?

Video on Rhea Ripley, who is big and strong but young.

Second Round: Dakota Kai vs. Rhea Ripley

The much bigger Ripley works on a headlock before diving over Kai, who snaps off some armdrags. A dropkick sends Ripley into the corner before a running kick to the chest makes things even worse. Ripley gets sent outside and drops her face first onto the apron for another two. Some running knees to the chest give Ripley the same and frustration is setting in.

The full nelson slam is broken up by a kick to the head, followed by a running dropkick. One heck of a running kick to the face in the corner gives Kai two, only to have Ripley superkick her away. A northern lights suplex drops Kai for two more and Ripley looks stunned. They head up top with Ripley getting caught in the Tree of Woe for the top rope double stomp to send Kai on at 7:03.

Rating: B-. Another good match, though this only sends Kai on to be Sane's latest victim. Ripley has every tool you could possibly need to be a huge star and I'm sure she's going to be just fine down in developmental. Kai looked great as well and should be just fine if she sticks around with NXT. Good match here as Ripley continues to impress.

Video on Candice LeRae, who will give everything she has to win this.

Video on Nicole Savoy, who loves to suplex people. She must have been miserable in the first round then as she didn't do a single one.

Johnny Gargano is here. I love how these wrestlers are ushered in and out

every match.

Second Round: Candice LeRae vs. Nicole Savoy

JR talks about PWG and my head threatens to explode. Lita on the other hand slips up a bit by saying Savoy's previous match was last night. Savoy kicks away a handshake offer and we're ready to go. The fans, with a decidedly female sounding voice, are behind Candice. Savoy sends her into the corner for a crash but LeRae comes right back out with a jumping Downward Spiral for two.

The first suplex drops LeRae for two and they trade modified surfboards. Candice elbows her way out of trouble and hits a Codebreaker for a breather. Savoy rolls some butterfly suplexes but can't get a cross armbreaker. Another kick to the head gives Candice a breather and it's off to something like a Black Widow to slow Savoy down. For some reason Savoy takes her up top and even old man JR knows it's a bad idea to put LeRae up top when her finisher comes from there. As you might expect, Ms. LeRae's Wild Ride ends Savoy at 5:54.

Rating: C+. Savoy looked better here but you knew LeRae was winning here, especially with the idea of her being massacred by Baszler in the next round. This was some good storytelling with LeRae fighting from underneath and being willing to go the extra mile to beat the fighting machine. Good match here.

Again, no brackets are shown for the next round but here you are:

Mercedes Martinez

Abbey Laith

Shayna Baszler

Candice LeRae

Toni Storm

Piper Niven

Dakota Kai

Kairi Sane

Overall Rating: B. Now this is more like it. The wrestling was good from top to bottom and while a lot of the endings were obvious, there's nothing wrong with having some good wrestling where you know who's winning. I'm digging this more and more every single episode and the fact that they've done this all in two major content drops is a great idea. Best show of the tournament so far with ease.

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