

Ryan Capuano's ECW report

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Pre-Show Thoughts:

I'm not a perfect man, regardless of what I've been accused for pretending to be. I don't ask for a lot when I turn on wrestling each week. Just solid wrestling, good personalities, and intelligent storylines. Normally, two out of three would be good enough, but when that last one is just so off-base, it causes me to go on a smarky rampage. This is going to be a very, very lengthy pre-show segment, so if you're just looking for the recap, scroll on down.

Reader James Hold sent in feedback to the site about something that most people didn't seem to catch, but I'm glad someone did. The fact that a TNA crew member was killed earlier this month in a set collapse accident makes this latest awful, bury-your-face-in-your-hands, never-watch-wrestling-again attempt at getting ratings all the more tasteless. I got a lot of flak last year for being so adamantly against the limo explosion angle (but a lot of agreement, as well), but I don't know how any self-respecting adult (or mild-mannered teenager) could see something like this and think it's a good idea. A friend of mine who was watching the show last night with me said, "I think..." and was immediately cut off by everyone else in the room because the next words out of his mouth were going to be, "...this is real." You know who you are, and you will never, ever live this down.

This is the kind of lowest common denominator Vince plays to with this shit. He wants people to feel bad for him because someone has it out for him. Whether this is an excuse to get Daniel Beck back on TV (more on that later) or a blatant example of the former, it just plain sucks. Hard. Vince is a human being and if something really did happen to him, I would feel sorry for him. But goddamn it. I mean, seriously. Have they learned NOTHING from last year? The fact that this angle wasn't even REMOTELY realistically done doesn't help matters either.

Speaking of Daniel Beck and last year, today (Wednesday) marks the one-year anniversary of when news broke about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and the tragic events surrounding that weekend. I've seen some things lately that have put that whole incident into context, but to this day, I'm left with a lot of personal, professional, and spiritual questions that I dare not ask in a public forum lest I receive an infinite amount of death threats. Besides, this isn't the place. But if you'd like to discuss any of them, or anything on your mind regarding this situation and how it seems so far removed, yet just like it was yesterday, feel free to shoot me a line. I know a lot of you wanted to put it out of your minds, but seeing as how I was the first wrestling columnist to comment fully on the issue, I'd be remiss if I didn't at least bring it up, because I'm sure a lot of you have remembered this somber occasion.

As for the draft itself, everyone, except for Jim Ross, went to the right show. But Todd Martin already said everything I was feeling about that, so yeah. As for the draft as a whole, ECW better get a hell of a lot of guys in the supplemental draft or I'm going to lose my mind.

Now. Finally. On to Night of Champions, formerly Vengeance. My head hurts from all this thinking and I'm not exactly looking forward to this PPV. I mean, I'm sure it'll be fine, but honestly, I just can't get into it. This year will be pretty tricky to predict of who will walk away with the top two belts. Considering that the WWE and World Heavyweight Champions are on the same show right now, conventional wisdom says one of them has to drop the belt. But who? Anyway, here's the card:

HHH vs. John Cena: I think Trips is going to want to hold on to that belt a little bit longer. Besides, it's a bit too soon for another Cena title reign, so I do see this one changing hands.

Edge vs. Batista: Too soon for a Batista run, too. But RAW needs a belt, and this is the prediction I'm sticking with. The WHC switches to RAW and Batista is bringing it with him.

Kane vs. Big Show vs. Mark Henry: A catch-as-catch-can classic in the making, possibly even teetering on the greatness of Big Daddy V vs. The Boogeyman. Big Show wins the title after pinning Henry, so the belt can stay on this show.

Holly and Rhodes vs. Ted Dibiase Jr. (or Liquid Randy Orton for the Metal Gear Solid fans) and a mystery partner: I won't spoil the identity of the mystery partner, but it hasn't been a very well-kept secret, so I don't know how many of you out there actually don't know. I like the choice and I think they'll be a good tag team. And I think they'll walk away with the belts.

Morrison and Miz vs. Finlay and Hornswoggle: Should have been an opportunity for a good wrestling match, but nope. Let's give the midget a shot and turn it into a comedy show. I swear to christ, if the titles change hands in this match, I will never watch wrestling again.

Matt Hardy vs. Chavo Guerrero: An interesting match-up since both guys are ECW wrestlers. I don't think it's time for Matt to drop the belt quite yet, so I think he'll retain in a pretty good match.

Mickie James vs. Katie Lea: Should be a good match, and it's good to see a fresh face in the title picture. That being

said, I think Mickie will retain, as Katie Lea doesn't have quite the momentum needed to make a convincing title change yet.

Considering every title is supposed to be on the line, I suspect a surprise bonus match or two will turn up here. The card is far from bad, but the matches are either stale, or uninteresting, with the exception of a couple of them. But enough of this posturing. Onward and upward to the Land of Extreme!

Show Review:

My cable company just started broadcasting Sci-Fi and USA in high-def, so this week's recap is brought to you in 1080i and Dolby Digital 5.1 where available (available in 1080p when the Blu-Ray comes out).

We start off with a recap of last night's money giveaway/set collapse shenanigans. God, was this tacky.

Teddy Long is in the ring, and says that in light of last night's accident, he wishes Vince the best, though he is not allowed to disclose his condition due to family privacy. He says that Vince would want the show to go on, so we're kicking things off with the newest member of ECW: Matt Hardy (a very worthwhile addition).

Matt Hardy and CM Punk vs. John Morrison and The Miz

Sign Guy is once again in the front row. How I LOATHE him. No Gregh, though. Hardy and Morrison start us off. Hardy nails a nice arm drag, but Morrison comes back with an arm bar. Hardy is able to switch out of it and tags in Punk. Punk snaps Morrison over for a two-count, but Morrison kicks Punk in the stomach and tag in Miz. Miz misses a back body drop on Punk, but Punk nails a kick and tags Hardy back in. Miz is able to gain control as the heels work over Hardy in an extended sequence. Hardy is able to get a chinbreaker and makes the tag to Punk. Punk comes in and goes to town on Miz. He and Hardy both hit their corner bulldogs, and when the cross paths in the middle, they slap each other five. Badass. Punk runs into the ropes, but Morrison pulls them down, sending Punk to the outside as we go to commercial.

Back from commercial, the heels are working over Punk. They do it so well, though. Punk is eventually able to roll out of a sunset flip and tag in Hardy. Hardy does all his signature spots on Morrison. He hits the Side Effect for two, but Miz makes the save. Punk takes him out of the ring with a clothesline. Hardy goes for the Twist of Fate on Morrison, but Morrison shoves him off, and Miz trips him up. Morrison hits the springboard roundhouse, but only gets a near fall. Miz tries to come back in, but Hornswoggle interferes, thus distracting Miz, and Punk to come in, punch Morrison into Hardy's Twist of Fate, and that's that.

FINAL RATING: ** Had a house show feel to it, but the crowd was red hot. And all four of these men are great workers, so it was far from bad. Just... there.

Kofi Kingston vs. Shelton Benjamin - Extreme Rules Match

No fancy technical stuff or high flying here. This was a pure brawl from the get-go. Eventually, Shelton gets the advantage, but Kofi flips out of a suplex and barrages Shelton with an assortment of kicks, the dropping variety sending Shelton to the outside. Kofi nails a vaulting body press to the outside, but Shelton immediately rams Kofi into the ring. Shelton grabs Tony Chimel's mic and drives it into Kofi's head. He tosses Kofi into the stairs to follow up. Shelton grabs a couple of trash cans and tosses them into the ring. He tries to use a chair on Kofi after tossing him back him, but Kofi punches him in the gut. It's all for naught, as Shelton kicks him violently in the stomach, following up with a gorilla press, then dropping Kofi across his knee. God, he's strong. He works over Kofi with a trash can. He wedges one in the corner turnbuckle. He then proceeds to demolish Kofi with a second trash can. He then nails a suplex onto it. He has some choice words for Kofi as he continues to pummel him right in the face. Shelton decides that all hardcore matches need a rest hold, so he goes into a bear hug. Kofi is able to get out of it, but Shelton shoves him into the corner and nails a pair of Shelton Stinger Splashes, but when he goes for the third, Kofi greets him with a trash can lid. Kofi works the lid over Shelton's head, nailing several very stiff shots. Kofi grabs the chair and goes to hit Shelton, but Shelton kicks him in the stomach. He hoists up Kofi for a corner powerbomb into that trash can, but Kofi nails a hurricanrana, sending Shelton right into it. Kofi hits the Jamaican Buzzsaw and picks up the victory, putting the cap on this feud.

FINAL RATING: **3/4 The pacing was off in parts, but when it was on, it was above average. Solid hardcore match with good brawling and the appropriate amount of fancy flying from Kofi.

The RAW Rebound focuses on the draft. The card for Night of Champions is then run down.

Mike Knox vs. Evan Bourne

Sign Guy does not approve of Mike Knox and boy, does he let him know it. Bourne tries to use his speed, but Knox just overpowers him, clubbing him with forearms. Bourne slides to the outside and nails some kicks to Knox's leg, but Knox won't have it. He nails a short-arm clothesline and drops several knees and stomps onto the poor guy. He nails a choo choo on Bourne in the corner and locks in a butterfly lock. Bourne tries to twist out of it, but Knox clobbers him and goes into an abdominal stretch. Knox releases the hold and whips Bourne into the corner. Bourne is able to nail a couple of

chop blocks and a spin kick to his head, as well as a missile dropkick for two. He nails a nice hurricanrana, but Knox hits a backbreaker, followed up with the Knox Out and gives the former ROH Tag Champion his first pinfall loss in the WWE. FINAL RATING: SQUASH Bourne got in some offense, but not enough to justify a higher rating. Knox is a glorified Snitsky, lucky that he's on ECW. On any other show, he would be a jobber to the stars. A lack of star power, or good booking on this show (probably a combination of both), however, have made Knox a credible threat and if nothing else, an interesting character. But boy, does he stink up the joint when he starts wrestling.

Kane vs. Mark Henry - Non-Title Match

Big Show down for commentary. How appropriate these two meet this particular week, seeing as how Chris Benoit's last PPV appearance was as a lumberjack for these two at One Night Stand 2007. This match is exactly what you would expect from these two. At least Khali is funny when he's in the ring. These two are just boring together. Henry uses a bunch of sloppy power moves and works a bear hug for an obscene amount of time before Kane makes a brief comeback, only to be caught with a World's Strongest Slam. Henry picks up a surprise win in a non-title match. FINAL RATING: DUD Bah.

Final Thoughts:

I'm suspending the Mike Adamle Quote of the Week, because he stopped being funny. Aside from being a really nice guy, he doesn't have a whole lot else going for him.

This was a straight wrestling show. And the wrestling was solid for the most part, so this show was a success. The booking continues to be strong and logical, something missing from the other two brands. The lack of star power without Kane and Punk will hurt them in future weeks, but it's serving its purpose as an on-air developmental league and it's settled into a niche that works for it. ECW is my favorite wrestling show on TV right now, and I mean that as a legit compliment, not as a slam against RAW, Smackdown!, iMPACT!, or AAA on Galavision.

That'll do it for this week. A lot has happened within the past couple of weeks here at the site. This merger is for the better, as the site has now become unstoppable in its quest for world domination. In all seriousness, though, I am happy to be apart of the Figure Four family, as well as the Observer family. Now I can say I work for the same site as Dr. Keith. Also a very special thanks for Kevin White Jr. for filling in last week. I was out of town, as I mentioned a couple weeks ago, so it's much appreciated. Enjoy Night of Champions and I'll see you next week.
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