

## Jeff Hamlin's TNA Impact TV report

7.17 TNA Impact Report by Jeff Hamlin (jhamlin@vilcom.com)

The Big News: In case there was any confusion (and how could there not have been?), Samoa Joe is a face. Booker T is a full-fledged heel. But Sting's loyalty is in question after Team 3-D and Kurt Angle teased he had turned heel and joined their faction.

Outside the arena, Booker T and Sharmell got out of a limo holding the TNA World Heavyweight Title. The announcers pointed out that a referee never made a three count when Booker pinned Joe, but Sharmell did. Booker and Sharmell opened the show with an in-ring interview. Basically Booker did the stolen belt angle, which this company does at least twice a year. Jim Cornette came out and demanded that Booker hand him the championship so he could give it back to Samoa Joe. Joe then came out, adorned in a three-piece suit. Crowd was totally behind Joe, and there's no question he was the face here. Joe said Booker could keep the belt as long as he knew he would be losing it at the Hard Justice PPV. Joe said after he was done with Booker, he was coming for Sting.

Backstage, Beer Money was standing by with Lauren. She rubbed it in about how hard the fans whipped them at Victory Road. Roode said tonight would be Beer Money's revenge and would whip fans in the building and visitors to the park. Then they took Lauren off camera.

The Hard Justice PPV will feature a performance by Filthy. Somebody explain to him what happened to Master P's career after 1999 WCW.

Kaz was backstage distraught about letting Team TNA down in the World Team X Cup. He brought up letting down Jerry Lynn, the Amazing Red, A.J. Styles and Christopher Daniels (wasn't he on the team?) He vowed to win the X Division championship tonight.

Peter Williams defeated Kaz to retain the TNA X Division Championship. Kaz's right elbow was heavily bandaged after the Ultimate X match. Good match with lots of counters out of finishers, including Williams a cartwheel out of the wave of the future. Kaz did a cool move where he slingshot Williams into the ring and caught him with a diamond cutter. Williams tried a Canadian Destroyer, but Kaz caught him with the emerald erosion. Rhaka Kahn distracted the ref. Later, Kaz hit the wave of the future, but Williams kicked out of his finisher. Crowd was really into it at this point. Kaz caught Williams with a kick on the top rope and teased the Flex Capacitor, but Williams hit a rolling reverse cradle and grabbed Kaz's trunks for the pin. Best match on the show. \*\*\*

Backstage, Eric Young told Jeremy Borash that the first top-secret meeting of the Prince Justice Brotherhood would be held tonight. Young said he was going to eavesdrop, but not to tell anyone. Except the one million viewers who just saw Young, of course.

Joe was waiting in Jim Cornette's office. Borash started to ask him about Sting, and started to mention something about him going to the dark side. Instantly, I flashed back to Sting's last heel turn in 1999 WCW. There's that year again. And there goes my convulsions again. Great story from that angle. The night after Sting turned, they did a Nitro from Chapel Hill, with around 5,000 paid in a 20,000-seat building (and they sold it out only five months before). The week before this show, they had a standard 1999 Nitro that was just ungodly awful. So Flair comes out for an interview and the place goes crazy. Then Sting and Lex Luger come out and order Flair to leave and never come back. Which led Flair to say, on the air, "Leave? Hell, I watched Nitro last week and said `Damn! They can't do it without the Nature Boy!'" By far, the biggest pop of the night. Anyway, Kevin Nash walked in and told Joe he was just trying to fire him up when he said he couldn't beat Booker. Joe acted like he wasn't sure if he could beat Booker. Nash told him that when a man loses his self-assurance, he's got nothing left. So apparently Nash and Joe are on good terms until the next PPV cycle.

They cut to the production truck where Beer Money was whipping various backstage personnel.

Borash was backstage waiting for Sting. Team 3-D and Kurt Angle all came out of a limo wearing Sting masks. Then Shark Boy, Curry Man and Super Eric were shown in a meeting. Eric said he was going to release the superhero gun. Curry asked what he meant, and Shark said he had to take a piss. Then Beer Money showed up and whipped everyone.

Matt Morgan defeated Jimmy Rave. Quick squash with Morgan getting the pin with a Mount Morgan Drop, which is a hanging vertical suplex into an uranage (rock bottom). DUD

Lance Hoyt came out with a new name, Lance Rock. He challenged Morgan to another match immediately.

Matt Morgan defeated Lance Rock. Morgan got the upper hand early but Christy Hemme interfered. Rock missed a moonsault, and Morgan hit a big boot. Morgan got another pin with a Mount Morgan Drop. ¼\*

Backstage, all the Knockouts were arguing with each other. Jim Cornette said he's heard all the complaining from the other knockouts about Taylor winning the championship. It seems that many of these skits with Cornette and the women turn out to be based on reality, and it wouldn't shock me if that was the case here. Cornette announced a 10-girl gauntlet match and the winner will get a title shot against Taylor Wilde next week. Traci then asked Cornette about the offer she made him and said he should think about it. Cornette had a big smile on his face thinking about it.

Finally, we know what Karen Angle's job is. Next week, she debuts her own talk show "Karen's Angle." She vows to ask the questions no one else will ask.

Beer Money was taking Lauren around the Universal Theme park, where they whipped security guards. Lauren's acting was so atrocious.

Team 3-D and Angle came out in the Sting gear. Angle said he talked with Sting the previous night, and welcomed him to his side. A.J. Styles, Rhino and Christian Cage came out. Styles said he still stood up for Sting, though he did have some questions to answer. Brother Ray challenged the faces to a table match at Hard Justice. Cage said the match would take place next week and it would be a table elimination match.

It was royal rumble type rules. It started as an over the top rope battle royal until the final two, when it would turn into a regular match. A woman would come into the ring every minute. Jacqueline and Gail Kim started it out. Jacqueline did a triangle armbar until Kim made the ropes. I don't know why Jacqueline broke the hold because there was no ref in the ring. Angelina Love was next in. Next was Salinas, who opened with the worst swinging neckbreaker in history on Love. Jacqueline almost did the tarantula on Kim. Velvet Sky came out next and jumped Salinas. Roxxi came out next, who teased the voodoo drop on Salinas, but Salinas reversed it into a facebuster. The Beautiful People threw Salinas over for the first elimination. Rhaka Kahn came out next and went after Kim. Kahn did an as kick on Roxxi that was well timed. Then she did another that was totally mistimed on Kim. Traci was next. She speared Love and went after Kahn. Then Christy Hemme came in, and she threw horrid forearms on Kim. Man, Kim was having to sell some bad offense out there. Crowd was chanting for ODB, who was the final person in. She's still got charisma despite treading water recently. ODB spit flask fluid into Hemme's face and did a running splash in the corner on the beautiful people. During a commercial, it turned into a Titanic battle royal. Kahn was eliminated by ODB, Traci was eliminated by Love, Hemme was eliminated by Kim. Then ODB was taken out by Roxxi and Jacqueline, which didn't make the crowd happy. Roxxi was eliminated by Jacqueline when she skinned the cat and took Roxxi over the top with head scissors. Then Roxxi pulled Jacqueline (who had gone over the top earlier but was still on the apron) to the floor anyway. So it was down to Love, Sky and Kim. Sounds like a Blaxploitation film from the 70s. Love and Kim wrestled themselves over the top rope, but Kim pushed her to the floor to eliminate her. So the regular match started and immediately Sky did a schoolgirl on Kim for the pin. Way too rushed to the end. \*

Booker T was in his locker room with Borash. Apparently Russo saw Rocky again this week because he took a scene from that film and wrote this sketch almost word for word. Except Booker was Apolo Creed. He was looking through a program and picked Consequences Creed as his opponent tonight. Then he called an emergency room and ordered a stretcher for tonight. Booker then proclaimed it a stretcher match. Why a stretcher match when the two haven't event faced each other before? Because it's TNA and we can't go more than a week without a meaningless stip match, that's why.

Black Machismo (in his Randy Savage voice again) was running down Sonjay Dutt when So Cal Val walked in and basically stuck up for Dutt. Countdown to heel turn continues.

Sonjay Dutt defeated Eric Young and Johnny Devine in a three-way X Division match. Devine and Dutt worked over Young early. Dutt was thrown out of the ring, allowing Devine and Young to work the meat of the match. Finish came when Young hit a DVD on Devine, then Dutt ran in and clipped Young for the pin. Postmatch, Machismo ran in and attacked Dutt. Then Devine ran in and jumped Machismo, who made his own comeback. Machismo was putting the fists to him when Val came down and urged him to stop. Machismo got a chair and was about to whack Dutt, but Val grabbed the chair. Then they did heel Lucha spot that was very clever in execution. Dutt wound up with the chair and teased hitting Machismo. Instead, while Val was walking up the ramp, Dutt hit the turnpost, flipped the chair to Machismo and sold it like Machismo had hit him. A furious Val was immediately in Machismo's face and they argued going to the back while Dutt watched with a evil grin on his face. This was well done. \*

Beer Money (listed as Beer Money Inc.) came out with straps. They teased whipping fans at ringside. They grabbed someone who was clearly a plant wearing an LAX shirt and laid the leather to him in the ring. Referees ran out to get destroyed. Then Pat Kinney and Scott D'Amore (in his farewell appearance) pleaded with them to stop, but they got whipped. D'Amore lost his pants, which had to be blurred out. Hell of a way to go out after seven years. Beer Money ran into the LAX area where Hector Guerrero was doing commentary. Storm and Roode jumped him and handcuffed him to the corner. They got countless shots in across Guerrero's back until LAX made the save. What the hell kept them? It was announced later that the Motor City Machine Guns will face Beer Money Inc. in a strap match next week.

Angle, 3-D and Tomko were in the dressing room with Borash. Apparently, they're a heel group now. Kurt said that Sting would join them next week. He also ordered Tomko to crash Karen's talk show debut. When Ray asked Tomko if he wanted to wear a Sting mask, he politely declined. It was similar to Tomko's long build to a face turn from last year, only they killed it with an ill-advised heel switch that he's never recovered from.

Consequences Creed did a promo building up his main event bout with Booker. He came across as the young upstart with nothing to lose.

Booker T defeated Consequences Creed in a stretcher match. Not much to it after the commercial break. Since they didn't have much time, it turned into a squash where Booker could dole out enough punishment to warrant Creed being carried out. After an ax kick, Booker placed him on a stretcher and they wheeled him out. EMS workers were about to put Creed into the ambulance when Joe came out, jumped Booker, put him in the ambulance and they carried him off. Sharmell came up from behind and was about to hit Joe with a baseball bat, but Joe caught her, grabbed the bat, and wondered if Sting gave it to her. ¼\*

SUMMARY: A better show in terms of storyline. It had one good match. The bad news is any past teases of a Sting heel turn has usually led to disaster. But it made for an interesting storyline for this show. Apparently, the lagging rating of the past two months have earned Russo more priority on the creative team, and that's apparent with all the gimmick matches that have been booked. I'm not sure the difference between a 0.9 and 1.1 makes much difference in terms of revenue, but this is a group with a 1990s mentality. Unfortunately, you know what that does to the workrate. {plug}