

Phil DiLiegro's ECW TV report for September 9

ECW TV Report for September 9, 2008
From Milwaukee

Matt Hardy came out to his usual strong reaction to open the program. You have to give Hardy credit for conveying that winning this ECW championship is a huge deal to him. Matt thanked his fans who had been with him for the support and thanked the critics for making him work even harder. Mark Henry and Tony Atlas interrupted; Henry demanded a rematch. Henry then threw a sucker punch and went to avalanche Hardy in the corner. Hardy eluded him and sent him out to the floor. Hardy then gave Tony Atlas the twist of fate which I believe makes the first real bump Atlas has taken as a manger.

Evan Bourne v. John Morrison

This should be an entertaining match and a reminder of how foolish it was to exclude both of these guys from Sunday's scramble match. Bourne hit a sunset flip from the apron early. Back standing, Bourne landed a round kick to get a two count. Similarly to last evening, Bourne then hit a huracanrana from the ring onto Morrison who was on the floor. After a strong start, the match went to a commercial break. Bourne hit a knee to put Morrison down and went up to the second rope, but was tripped there by Miz. After a rest hold, Bourne teased a comeback but Morrison put down again with a couple of strikes. A uranage into a backbreaker followed by a side Russian leg sweep picked up a near fall. After another submission hold, Bourne fired back with his array of kicks and a huracanrana for a two count. Bourne went for a standing moonsault but Morrison kicked him mid-move. Morrison then missed a moonsault of his own. Bourne rallied back and went up top. Miz jumped onto the apron prompting Bourne to hit a double axe handle onto Miz. On the apron, Bourne then took a stiff springboard enzuigiri from Morrison leading to a nasty bump right on the apron. Morrison quickly covered from there. It's very possible Bourne legitimately injured himself taking that bump as the apron is an awfully dangerous to place to work from. This was a very good match up until that point.

Morrison d. Bourne, Pin, 14:40, *** $\frac{1}{4}$.

Jack Swagger v. Josh Daniels

Swagger is the new name for Jake Hager, a developmental wrestler with a good physique who had been given a long winning streak in FCW. The announcers called Swagger an "All-American, American" and played up his collegiate wrestling background at Oklahoma. That's similar to how the WWF brought in Bob Backlund some 32 years ago as "everyone's All-American boy" with the great amateur background. Swagger took the jobber down and went to work on ground. He then connected with a gut-wrench suplex and side slam. Swagger finished with a blue thunder bomb (back suplex into a powerbomb), as I am relieved the new guy didn't job in his debut.

Swagger d. Daniels, Pin, 2:10, squash.

Before the match, they booked a quick comedy vignette with Hornswoggle and Ricky Ortiz.

Finlay & Matt Hardy v. Mark Henry & Mike Knox

Henry overpowered Hardy to begin and put him down with a clothesline. Henry hit his usual slow methodical offense and picked up a couple of near falls. After about two minutes, Hardy slipped out of a slam and tried for a twist of fate but Henry countered out. Henry set up for a splash but missed as the match went to break. After the match, Knox finally got in a little offense before conceding the hot tag to Finlay. Finlay hit a series of clotheslines, the Celtic cross and then sent Knox out to the floor. After sending Knox back in, Finlay hesitated and walked into a chicken kick. Henry tagged back in and did some damage on the mat. Knox tagged in and did the same. Knox then missed a knee drop allowing the hot tag to Matt. Hardy came in with clotheslines and a bulldog off of the second rope. The side effect followed by a moonsault off of the top rope led to a pin attempt broken up by Henry. Finlay then took out Henry with the shillelagh allowing Hardy to score the win with the twist of fate.

Finlay & Hardy d. Henry & Knox, Pin, 12:14, **.

Final Analysis: Like many of you, I have long admired the work of Matt Hardy. He has consistently been a very good worker and an individual who almost always gets over at a level above his push. The Rock 'n Roll Express are considered bona fide Hall of Fame contenders and historically I see little difference between their careers and those of the Hardy Boys. RnR drew more money at their peak for sure as they were given to opportunity to headline at the territorial level. On the other hand, one cannot begrudge the Hardys too much as they never have been given a fair chance to do so as a team. In a way, the success of the Hardys (and Edge & Christian) is even more remarkable than the success of the top eighties teams as they came up with a promoter not at all inclined to push tag teams. They also achieved success on a worldwide basis and have been genuine merchandise draws, far beyond their push would merit. Like the Express, they have managed to have a connection with female fans and have been good workers. Whereas the Express set the standard for the classic formula tag match, the Hardys were instrumental in building the modern classic of the tag team ladder match. We are coming up on the ten year anniversary of the Hardys first real push in WWE; they were job guys for some time which makes their rise even more special as once you get that reputation it becomes hard to overcome. Their accomplishments deserve recognition.

In the present time, you have to give Matt Hardy credit for conveying that winning this ECW championship is a huge deal to him. In reality, it's just like winning the IC title and in a dopey fashion to boot, but Matt plays it much better than that. On Sunday, he helped take a match that was terrible for its first fifteen minutes into an exciting climax. His run with ECW has been a huge success as ratings have risen about 30% since his arrival from Smackdown (Finlay deserves some credit there, too). That's not just a token rise in ratings, either. It is important for ECW to stay comfortably above a 1.0 or so in order to ensure renewal on the SciFi network. I exaggerate little when I say that Hardy has helped save the ECW program and the millions in rights fees that go along with it.

Feedback is welcome at philfortyfour@yahoo.com.
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