

ECW TV report by Phil DiLiegro

ECW Report for January 6, 2009

Taped yesterday from New Orleans, LA

Finlay v. Jack Swagger

For the early part of the match, Swagger landed a couple of takedowns and worked Finlay over on the mat. Finlay turned it around with European uppercuts and a hip toss. Somewhere in here, Matt Striker intimated that, if Swagger lost, he would still be number one contender. That kind of takes the drama away from the outcome of the match. Anyway, things picked up when Finlay clotheslined Swagger to the floor and Hornswoggle hit a crossbody off the apron. Swagger then slammed Hornswoggle into the barricade hard. An enraged Finlay then slammed Swagger into the barricade repeatedly before going to check in on his son. That led to a convenient commercial break. Coming back, Swagger held a hammer lock while Finlay had a busted lip. Swagger got a near fall off of a back suplex. Finlay escaped briefly with a hip toss but Swagger came back with a couple of kicks. After Finlay took a powder, Swagger landed a clothesline in the ring. He went to an arm bar before getting some offense in the corner. Swagger hit a knee lift for a near fall. After going back to the hammer lock, Swagger used a shoulder breaker for another near fall. Swagger missed and Finlay came back with clotheslines and a splash for a near fall. The rolling hills led to another near fall before Finlay crashed into the ring post (very well done by the way). Swagger got a near fall off of a roll up. Finlay countered out of a gutwrench power bomb attempt with a double leg takedown and a rolling cradle. Finlay went to work in the corner but Swagger hit a short knee and went into the gutwrench powerbomb. He covered for the three count.

This was overall a strong match despite a fairly dull first four minutes or so. You can really see WWE has developed quite a bit of confidence in Swagger. Having him beat Finlay in long TV matches is identical to what they did with Bobby Lashley at a similar stage in his career. Also, he got to be the first heel since JBL in March to get real heat on Hornswoggle (as best as I can recall). It worked well, precisely for that reason, too.

Swagger d. Finlay, Pin, 14:05, ***.

Swagger walked into Teddy Long's office and rattled off his victories. He asked when he's getting his title shot. Amazingly, Long made the match for next week as opposed to at the Royal Rumble. That sends a strong message about where ECW stands in the brand pecking order. Even the women's championship gets to be defended at the pay-per-view.

Alicia Fox v. Katie Lea Burchill

Alicia hit some halfway decent offense to start: a monkey flip and a crossbody. Katie knocked Fox off the apron. But Fox came back in the middle of the ring with some one-legged dropkicks and an axe kick (which did not look good). Burchill came back by throwing Alicia off the middle rope and landing a backbreaker for the pin.

Did I miss when Gabriel and Fox became babyfaces? I suppose the gimmick could play in a way similar to how Too Cool and Rikishi got over in the early part of the decade, but everything up to the last two weeks had pointed to this being a heel act. As for the in ring debut of Alicia Fox, she largely lived off to her poor reputation from FCW as she did not look good aside from the initial flurry of offense.

Katie Lea d. Alicia, Pin, 2:05, ¼*.

They aired the Raw Rebound where they gave away the presumptive WrestleMania main event for free (on opposite sides off a tag match, but foolish nonetheless). Next week, WWE offers up what was the main event of WrestleMania 23 for free. But hey, last week's rating was up 0.2 ratings points, and that is what really matters after all.

Boogey Man v. Brett Barnes

Boogey Man now has black face paint as Matt Striker compared Boogey Man to Undertaker and Kane. The Matt Striker of old would have compared him to Papa Shango. Boogey hit a headbutt and Irish whip into the corner. After some stalling, he hit two short clotheslines and another charging clothesline with Barnes in the corner. Boogey Man hit a pump handle slam for the win. Barnes had to eat the worms as the segment ended.

Boogey Man squash, 2:13.

They aired a promotional piece for Behind Enemy Lines: Colombia. I remember at the annual WWE investors conference about two years ago where Vince McMahon, upon fielding a question about WWE films, went on and on about how making movies is all about telling good stories. And that if you have good storytelling, that you don't need fancy CGI or special effects. Since then, WWE films has released The Marine, The Condemned and now this Ken Kennedy vehicle.

Matt Hardy v. Mark Henry

Once again, this match is nontitle. Matt Striker dropped Jacques Rougeau's name. Henry hit a headbutt and worked over Hardy on the mat with a neck vice. Henry then threw the champion out to the floor. Outside, Hardy slipped out of a gorilla press slam and pushed Henry into the steps. Back inside, Henry retook control and went to back to the neck vice. He missed an avalanche in the corner. Hardy then sent Henry out to the floor with a clothesline and hit a crossbody off of the top rope onto Henry on the floor. After the high spot, the match went to commercial. Returning, Henry held a chin lock after taking control during the commercial break. He hit a hanging vertical suplex for a two count. Henry did some of his usual offense. Hardy came back and went to work on the left leg of Henry. Both men then escaped the other's finisher. Hardy hit a bulldog off of the second rope. He went for the twist of fate but Henry countered into a front suplex. Henry then missed a big splash. Hardy tried for the twist of fate for the third time and hit to lead to the

deciding pin.

This was one of the better Henry-Hardy matches. This feud has definitely run its course as the feud began when Hardy was chasing for the championship in August. It was smart booking in that light to give Hardy a strong clean win to conclude the program. Coupled with the smart booking in the opening match, WWE has booked themselves a strong main event program. Which makes it all the more inexplicable that they are giving it away for free in one week. Hardy d. Henry, Pin, 10:20, **¼.