

Ring King: 2026

Promotion: United Toughness Alliance
Date: September 26, 2026
Location: Crypto.com Arena — Los Angeles, California

Preview

Who will be crowned the 2026 Ring King?

Results

Cold Open

Segment

Black.

For several seconds, there is nothing.

Then a single metallic sound.

CLANG.

A crown drops onto a dark surface beneath a narrow beam of light.

UTA footage begins to flicker across the screen.

Sixteen faces.

Chris Ross.

Samuel Scythe.

Bobby Dean.

Mikey Unlikely.

Emily Hightower.

Hakuryu.

Then the qualifiers.

Kirsty McKinney. Bianca Page. Lindsey Lothario. Mike Best. Maxwell Jett. Selina Santorino. Sol Azteca. Yoshii. Madman Szalinski. Marie Van Claudio.

The music begins slowly beneath the images.

Narrator: Sixteen entered.

Rapid flashes from the opening round begin cutting with the beat.

Sol Azteca standing across from Selina Santorino.

Bianca Page fighting Lindsey Lothario.

Samuel Scythe overwhelming Madman Szalinski.

Chris Ross battling Mikey Unlikely.

Then a hooded figure attacking Ross outside the ring.

The referee counting.

Mikey looking confused.

The hood coming down later.

Madman Szalinski.

Narrator: Some advanced through domination.

Hakuryu is blinded by Sinja's powder.

Kirsty McKinney capitalizes.

Narrator: Some through opportunity.

Bianca Page strikes Emily Hightower.

Maxwell Jett advances.

Narrator: Some through chaos.

Mike Best drives a knee into Bobby Dean with I KNEED A HERO!

One.

Two.

Three.

The music drops lower.

Mike helps Bobby back to his feet.

Mike Best: Don't lose that again.

Cut to Bobby Dean eight days ago, staring directly into the camera.

Bobby Dean: Eric thinks the joke is that Bobby Dean is the International Champion.

A beat.

Bobby Dean: The joke's gonna be when he realizes I wasn't an accident.

The music suddenly surges.

Eric Dane Jr. launches through the air.

John Phillips: SD3!

Eric covers Bobby.

One.

Two.

Three.

Eric rises.

The International Championship is nearby.

He looks at it.

He does not touch it.

Instead, Eric points at the championship.

Then at Bobby.

Eric Dane Jr.: Eight days.

Bobby raises the championship.

Eric Dane Jr.: For now.

Bobby Dean: For now.

SMASH CUT.

Yoshii and Hakuryu collide.

The enormous Yoshii drives forward as Hakuryu desperately tries to change the angle.

Sinja watches from ringside.

Another image.

Powder exploding into Hakuryu's face weeks earlier.

Hakuryu staring coldly at his disciple.

Hakuryu: Strike one.

Back to September 18.

Sinja starts to move toward the action.

Hakuryu looks at him.

Sinja immediately steps backward.

Later, Hakuryu takes the United States Championship from him.

A long pause.

One small nod.

Then Yoshii and Hakuryu are being separated by officials.

Yoshii: NEXT WEEK!

Hakuryu: Yes.

Yoshii: End.

Hakuryu: End.

The image cuts to black on the final word.

A steel chair unfolds in the darkness.

Emily Hightower sits down backward on it.

A trash can lands on a table.

A chain.

A kendo stick.

Duct tape.

Another steel chair.

Finally, Emily picks up a baking sheet.

Emily Hightower: Makes a funny noise.

CLANG!

Bianca Page's face flashes onto the screen with the sound.

Bianca costing Emily her tournament match.

Emily retaliating against Bianca.

Emily Hightower: Now we're even.

Bianca confronting Emily.

Bianca Page: Next Saturday I'm taking it.

Emily Hightower: Good. That's what I wanted to hear.

Bianca Page: Eight days.

Emily smiles.

Emily Hightower: I'll bring the groceries.

A violent burst of Hardcore Match imagery flashes across the screen before suddenly cutting to Samuel Scythe.

The Fighting Championship rests over his shoulder.

Ace Andrews stands nearby.

Sione Maivia behind them.

Ace Andrews: Platinum Society doesn't need a crown.

Scythe's destruction of Madman Szalinski flashes across the screen.

Scythe hoists the Fighting Championship.

Then Savior Hawkins appears.

Champion.

Challenger.

The Fighting Championship between them.

Another hard cut.

A Revolutionary War-style musket fills the screen.

Madman Szalinski: Be vewy, vewy quiet...

The music stops.

BANG!

Madman's eyes widen.

Madman Szalinski: SORRY!

Ross stares at him.

Madman Szalinski: UNPLANNED SPOT!

The music returns, but its tone has changed.

Madman tackles Ross.

Madman Szalinski: Anytime, anywhere... The Madness can strike too!

Madman scrambles away.

Madman Szalinski: Tag! You're it, champ!

Ross laughs.

For a moment, the montage embraces the absurdity.

Madman hunting the Reaper.

Ross hiding in Madman's car.

The musket.

The chase.

The provocations.

Then everything stops.

September 18.

Ross watches the footage on a television.

He laughs.

He reaches forward.

The television clicks off.

Black.

When Ross speaks again, there is nothing funny left in his voice.

Chris Ross: But you've got eight days.

The UTA Championship appears over Ross's shoulder.

Chris Ross: You wanted this... your shot... more than anything, you wanted me.

Madman's grin disappears.

Chris Ross: You made me interested.

Quick flashes of Ross's violence cut between every few words that follow.

Chris Ross: At Ring King, I don't give a fuck about three seconds.

Ross standing over an opponent.

Chris Ross: I don't care if I pin you.

Madman staring back at him.

Chris Ross: I don't care if you pin me.

The UTA Championship.

Chris Ross: Because a three count doesn't mean shit to me.

The screen goes black again.

Chris Ross: What matters... is which one of us walks out on his own two feet.

An ambulance door slams shut.

Chris Ross: And which one goes home in a fucking ambulance.

Ross fills the screen.

Chris Ross: You wanted your shot.

Madman.

Chris Ross: You got it.

Black.

Chris Ross: Now survive it.

Silence.

Then...

ONE.

Sol Azteca defeats Selina Santorino.

TWO.

Bianca Page defeats Lindsey Lothario.

THREE.

Samuel Scythe defeats Madman Szalinski.

FOUR.

Mikey Unlikely advances past Chris Ross.

FIVE.

Kirsty McKinney defeats Hakuryu.

SIX.

Maxwell Jett defeats Emily Hightower.

SEVEN.

Marie Van Claudio defeats Maxx Mayhem.

EIGHT.

Mike Best defeats Bobby Dean.

The pace increases.

Eight faces remain.

Sol.

Bianca.

Scythe.

Mikey.

Kirsty.

Maxwell.

Marie.

Mike.

Then four.

Sol Azteca.

Mikey Unlikely.

Kirsty McKinney.

Mike Best.

Narrator: Sixteen became eight.

Mikey catches Samuel Scythe with the inside cradle.

Narrator: Eight became four.

Mike Best survives Marie Van Claudio's Sharpshooter.

Narrator: Four became two.

The semifinal footage takes over.

Sol Azteca and Mikey Unlikely firing through the final counter sequence.

Sol attempts the enziguri.

Mikey ducks.

Sol catches herself and immediately begins pushing upright.

For half a heartbeat, her back is exposed.

Mikey sees it.

He rolls her backward.

Sol fights.

Mikey adjusts.

Sol fights again.

Mikey stacks deeper.

One.

Two.

Three.

Sol escapes immediately.

Mikey helps her to her feet.

Mikey Unlikely: She was right.

Three fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: That's all I needed.

Sol Azteca: You found them.

Mikey Unlikely: Barely.

A beat.

Mikey Unlikely: Don't forget that part.

Cut.

Kirsty McKinney twists Mike Best into another amateur wrestling exchange.

Mike escapes.

Kirsty catches him again.

The Shear Cradle.

One!

Two!

Mike escapes at the last possible instant.

The Pitty Choke.

Mike's face reddens.

His movements slow.

He survives.

Mike tries I KNEED A HERO!

Kirsty has it scouted.

Again.

She avoids it.

Again.

Another answer.

Until finally...

Mike creates one problem too many.

Mark Bravo: I KNEED A HERO!

Impact.

One.

Two.

Three.

Mike Best rises.

Cut to Kirsty afterward.

Kirsty McKinney: That Mike Best was better tonight.

Another beat.

Kirsty McKinney: Not unbeatable. Not untouchable. Better tonight.

Mike Best stands alone inside the ring.

Kirsty McKinney: Now I know where the line is. Next time I cross it.

The music builds toward its final crescendo.

Mikey Unlikely walks onto the stage.

The WrestleZone Championship rests over his shoulder.

There is no smile.

No joke.

No pose.

Mike notices him.

The two men stare across the arena.

Quick flashes interrupt the stare.

Mikey surviving Scythe.

Mike defeating Bobby.

Mikey finding three seconds against Sol.

Mike surviving Kirsty's choke.

Mikey raising the WrestleZone Championship.

Mike driving his knee into another opponent.

Then back to the stare.

Narrator: One built a career making sure the world never stopped watching.

Mikey.

Narrator: One never cared whether the world was watching at all.

Mike.

Narrator: Different roads.

Images of their tournament paths alternate faster and faster.

Narrator: Different answers.

Mikey.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike.

Narrator: Same destination.

The music cuts.

We return to the crown from the opening.

Two shadows now fall across it from opposite directions.

Narrator: Sixteen wanted it.

The Ring King bracket flashes onto the screen, every eliminated name disappearing until only two remain.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

Narrator: Tonight...

A hand reaches toward the crown.

Cut to black before we see whose.

Narrator: ...there can only be one.

UTA RING KING 2026

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

TONIGHT.

Introduction

Segment

The final image of the crown disappears into black.

For one heartbeat, the screen remains dark.

Then the Crypto.com Arena EXPLODES.

Pyrotechnics erupt across the entrance stage in rapid succession, racing from one side of the massive Ring King set to the other before a final blast sends sparks cascading from above. The capacity crowd in Los Angeles rises as one, filling the arena with a wall of noise.

The enormous video wall flashes through images of a crown, the sixteen-person tournament bracket and tonight's competitors before settling on the massive gold-and-black RING KING 2026 logo.

The camera sweeps across the arena.

Fans hold championship belts overhead. Homemade signs fill the lower bowl. Others point toward the ring as the camera passes them. One fan wears a cheap plastic crown. Another has brought an enormous cardboard sign reading THREE SECONDS. A nearby Mike Best supporter immediately reaches over and covers the word THREE with a handwritten sign reading RESULTS.

The camera continues its sweep before settling on the ring beneath the lights.

John Phillips: Sixteen competitors. Five weeks of tournament wrestling. Qualifiers, opening rounds, quarterfinals, semifinals... and after everything it took to get here, we have finally arrived! Welcome to Los Angeles! Welcome to Ring King 2026!

Mark Bravo: Look at this place, John! Crypto.com Arena is packed, everybody's got an opinion, half of them are

wearing crowns they bought at a party store, and by the time we leave here tonight only ONE person gets to wear one that actually matters!

John Phillips: I'm John Phillips alongside Mark Bravo, and tonight United Toughness Alliance crowns the 2026 Ring King. Mikey Unlikely. Mike Best. Two completely different paths through this tournament have brought two of UTA's most accomplished competitors to the same destination.

The screen briefly shows the tournament bracket.

Sixteen names fill the original field.

One after another, the eliminated competitors fade away.

Sol Azteca.

Kirsty McKinney.

Samuel Scythe.

Marie Van Claudio.

Maxwell Jett.

Bianca Page.

Until only two names remain illuminated.

MIKEY UNLIKELY

MIKE BEST

Mark Bravo: And nobody handed either one of them that spot. Mikey had to survive the UTA Champion Chris Ross, the Fighting Champion Samuel Scythe, and then Sol Azteca. Three completely different problems, three completely different answers.

John Phillips: And Mike Best has been relentless. Valkyrie Knox in the qualifier. International Champion Bobby Dean. Marie Van Claudio. Then Kirsty McKinney in a semifinal where Kirsty had an answer for nearly everything Mike threw at her.

Mark Bravo: Nearly.

John Phillips: That's the word, isn't it?

Mark Bravo: That's this whole damn tournament. Nearly. Sol nearly denied Mikey those three seconds. Kirsty nearly choked Mike Best unconscious. Fifteen people can leave this tournament talking about what they nearly did. Tonight Mikey and Mike get to find out which one of them actually finishes it.

The camera returns to the crowd as another roar rolls through the building.

John Phillips: And somehow, Mark, that's only our main event.

Mark Bravo: Oh, tonight is stupid, John.

John Phillips: Stupid?

Mark Bravo: Look at the card! We have Emily Hightower and Bianca Page in a Hardcore Match. Emily was shopping for weapons eight days ago like she was planning a cookout!

John Phillips: Including the baking sheet.

Mark Bravo: Especially the baking sheet. Funny noise.

John Phillips: Bianca Page may not find it quite as funny if Emily hits her with it.

Mark Bravo: Depends on the noise.

A graphic appears for the UTA Hardcore Championship.

Bianca Page stands opposite Emily Hightower, the Hardcore Championship prominently displayed between them.

John Phillips: Bianca Page wanted championship gold. Emily Hightower gave her exactly what she asked for, even if it wasn't the championship Bianca thought she was getting. Tonight there are no disqualifications, no countouts and very few restrictions on exactly how far either woman can go.

The graphic changes.

Yoshii.

Hakuryu.

The United States Championship.

John Phillips: Yoshii attempts to regain the United States Championship from Hakuryu in what promises to be one of the most fascinating stylistic battles of the evening.

Mark Bravo: Five hundred and eighty-three pounds, John. Hakuryu can analyze all he wants, and he's damn good at it, but eventually Yoshii is going to be standing in front of him and there ain't a spreadsheet on Earth that makes that man smaller.

John Phillips: And somewhere in the equation is Sinja.

Mark Bravo: That's the part I'm watching.

John Phillips: Sinja obeyed every instruction Hakuryu gave him eight days ago. Tonight is supposed to be his final opportunity to prove himself to his teacher.

Mark Bravo: We just don't know what Hakuryu's going to ask him to do.

The United States Championship graphic disappears.

Samuel Scythe and Savior Hawkins replace it.

John Phillips: Samuel Scythe puts the Fighting Championship on the line against Savior Hawkins under Fighting Championship Rules.

Mark Bravo: Platinum Society walked into Los Angeles with Ace Andrews telling everybody they don't need the Ring King crown to have power. Fine. Tonight Scythe has to make sure they don't start losing the power they already have.

The graphic changes again.

Eric Dane Jr.

Bobby Dean.

International Championship.

The crowd reacts noticeably louder.

John Phillips: Eight days ago, Eric Dane Jr. did what Bobby Dean spent weeks insisting he couldn't do.

Mark Bravo: No, no. Let's make this perfectly clear because I don't want anybody rewriting history depending on what happens tonight. Eric Dane Jr. pinned Bobby Dean.

John Phillips: Clean.

Mark Bravo: Middle of the ring. SD3. One, two, three. No excuse.

John Phillips: And perhaps the most important thing that happened afterward was what Eric did not do. He did not touch Bobby's International Championship.

Mark Bravo: Because he thinks he's taking it tonight.

The screen briefly shows Eric pointing toward Bobby's championship eight days earlier.

Eric Dane Jr.: For now.

Then Bobby's response.

Bobby Dean: For now.

The live crowd cheers as the graphic disappears.

Then the mood changes.

The UTA Championship appears on the screen.

Chris Ross on one side.

Madman Szalinski on the other.

John Phillips: And then there's this.

Mark Bravo: Yeah.

For once, Bravo doesn't immediately have a joke.

John Phillips: Madman Szalinski spent weeks trying to provoke Chris Ross into giving him another opportunity at the UTA Championship. He followed him. He hunted him. He annoyed him. He attacked him. At times he made the Reaper of Harrisburg laugh.

Mark Bravo: That was probably the safest part of this entire situation.

John Phillips: Because eventually Chris Ross stopped laughing.

The graphic shows Ross holding the UTA Championship.

Mark Bravo: Madman wanted Ross to take him seriously. Congratulations. He succeeded.

John Phillips: Ross said eight days ago that he doesn't care about three seconds tonight. He doesn't care whether he pins Madman. He doesn't even care whether Madman pins him. Chris Ross said the only thing he cares about is which man leaves this arena under his own power.

Mark Bravo: Madman wanted his shot. Ross gave it to him. Now we find out whether Madman understood what he was asking for.

The UTA Championship graphic fades.

The camera returns to a wide shot of the arena.

The crowd continues roaring.

John Phillips: Six matches. Five championships. One tournament crown. Months of fighting have brought us here.

Mark Bravo: And there's nothing left to advertise, John. Nothing left to threaten. Nothing left to promise. Everybody who said they were going to do something is in this building.

Bravo pauses.

Mark Bravo: Time to do it.

Phillips looks toward the ring.

John Phillips: Los Angeles...

The crowd begins rising again as the arena lights start changing for the opening contest.

John Phillips: ...Ring King starts RIGHT NOW!

Bianca Page vs. Emily Hightower

Match

The lights inside Crypto.com Arena settle as the opening-match graphic fills the screen.

BIANCA PAGE

vs.

EMILY HIGHTOWER

UTA HARDCORE CHAMPIONSHIP

A final line appears beneath them.

HARDCORE MATCH — NO DISQUALIFICATIONS

The crowd reacts immediately.

John Phillips: We talked about it before the show began. There are no disqualifications here. There are no countouts. Anything goes, and the championship changes hands by pinfall or submission.

Mark Bravo: Which means we're opening Ring King with Emily Hightower being told there are no rules.

John Phillips: Correct.

Mark Bravo: Great. Fantastic. Somebody check our insurance.

The graphic disappears.

The opening notes of "Wildest Dreams" by Taylor Swift begin playing throughout Crypto.com Arena.

The response from Los Angeles is immediate.

Boos roll down from the stands as "Classy" Bianca Page emerges from backstage.

Bianca stops at the top of the entrance way.

She doesn't look nervous.

She doesn't look overwhelmed.

She looks delighted.

A broad smile spreads across Bianca's face as she takes in the crowd before raising one hand to her lips and blowing a kiss toward the audience.

The boos get louder.

Bianca's smile gets wider.

Then Ace Andrews steps through the curtain behind her.

The Corporate Cutthroat is dressed for the occasion, standing alongside Bianca with the relaxed confidence of a man who has spent weeks telling anyone who would listen that Platinum Society does not require the Ring King crown to

possess power in UTA.

Tonight they have an opportunity to acquire something else.

Championship gold.

Bianca turns slightly toward Ace.

He gives her a small nod.

Then another figure emerges.

The reaction changes.

Samuel Scythe steps onto the stage carrying the UTA Fighting Championship.

Bianca stands between Ace and Scythe for a moment, the three members of Platinum Society framed beneath the enormous Ring King video wall.

John Phillips: And Bianca Page has not come alone.

Mark Bravo: No, she has not.

John Phillips: Ace Andrews and the reigning UTA Fighting Champion Samuel Scythe accompanying Bianca to ringside.

Mark Bravo: Which is completely legal tonight. That's the important part. They aren't sneaking down here. They aren't hiding behind the barricade. There are no disqualifications. If Ace wants to get involved, he can. If Scythe wants to get involved, he can.

John Phillips: Emily Hightower is the defending champion, but Bianca Page has made absolutely certain she isn't walking into Emily's kind of match without backup.

Bianca starts down the aisle.

Ace follows just behind her.

Scythe brings up the rear.

The contrast is almost absurd.

Bianca moves with the easy confidence and poise of someone arriving at an event being held in her honor. She smiles toward the fans, occasionally extending a hand only to pull it away before anyone can touch her.

Ace surveys the arena like a businessman inspecting an acquisition.

Scythe doesn't acknowledge anyone.

The Fighting Champion simply walks.

Eyes forward.

Championship with him.

No smile.

No concern.

Mark Bravo: Look at Scythe.

John Phillips: What about him?

Mark Bravo: Bianca's enjoying herself. Ace is probably calculating the resale value of the building. Scythe looks like somebody told him there might be people down here he gets to hurt.

John Phillips: Samuel Scythe has his own championship defense later tonight against Savior Hawkins. You have to wonder whether being out here is wise.

Mark Bravo: You can wonder. I'm not walking over there and asking him.

Bianca reaches ringside.

She pauses.

Then performs a slight twirl, soaking in another chorus of boos before walking toward the ring steps.

Ace takes position near the corner.

Scythe stops on the floor.

Bianca climbs the steps and reaches the ropes.

She stops.

The referee looks at her.

Bianca looks at the referee.

She motions toward the ropes.

Mark Bravo: Well?

The referee hesitates for a moment before opening the ropes for her.

Only then does Bianca enter.

Mark Bravo: There we go. Championship match or not, we're not abandoning civilization entirely.

Bianca walks directly into the center of the ring.

She raises both arms out to her sides.

The boos pour down around her.

She closes her eyes for a moment and absorbs every bit of it.

Outside the ring, Ace applauds.

Scythe doesn't.

He has turned toward the entrance.

Watching.

Waiting.

Bianca eventually lowers her arms and looks toward him.

She follows his stare toward the stage.

Her smile remains.

John Phillips: Bianca Page has been very clear about what she wants. She believes she belongs among UTA's champions. Tonight is her first opportunity to prove it.

Mark Bravo: And let's remember how we got here. Bianca cost Emily Hightower her place in the Ring King Tournament. Emily returned the favor against Bianca. Emily said they were even.

John Phillips: Bianca wanted more.

Mark Bravo: Bianca wanted a championship match.

John Phillips: And Emily gave her one.

Mark Bravo: Just not the one Bianca thought she was asking for.

The camera moves closer to Bianca.

For all the arrogance surrounding her, there is something different beneath it tonight.

Focus.

Eight days ago, Bianca treated the Hardcore Championship like something beneath the championship she actually wanted.

Emily Hightower took exception.

Bianca's answer was simple.

She was going to take it.

Now Bianca looks toward the entrance and waits for the woman she intends to take it from.

Outside, Ace moves closer to Scythe.

The Fighting Champion still hasn't moved his eyes from the stage.

John Phillips: Bianca Page has Ace Andrews. She has Samuel Scythe. In almost any other situation, you'd say that's an enormous advantage.

Mark Bravo: Almost.

John Phillips: You know what's coming, don't you?

Bravo chuckles.

Mark Bravo: Oh, I know exactly what's coming.

The music fades.

Bianca waits inside the ring.

Ace waits outside it.

Samuel Scythe rolls his shoulders once.

And all three members of Platinum Society stare toward the entrance.

Mark Bravo: Because Bianca brought a Fighting Champion to a family reunion.

For several seconds, nothing happens.

Bianca Page waits in the ring.

Ace Andrews stands on the floor.

Samuel Scythe stares toward the entrance.

Then the opening of "The Outsiders" by Eric Church hits.

Crypto.com Arena erupts.

Bianca's smile fades just slightly.

John Phillips: And here comes the champion!

The video wall fills with images of rusted steel, sparks and scrap metal as the lights sweep across the entrance.

But Emily Hightower doesn't walk through the curtain.

Instead, an engine growls.

Mark Bravo: Oh, here we go.

A beat-up 1978 Chevy pickup slowly emerges beside the entrance stage.

The truck looks spectacularly out of place inside the polished presentation of Ring King 2026.

Which makes it perfect.

Emily Hightower is behind the wheel.

The UTA Hardcore Championship sits beside her.

And Emily is not alone.

David Hightower rides with her.

Buck Hightower is there.

Dakota Hightower is there.

The entire Hightower Clan has come to Los Angeles.

John Phillips: Oh my.

Mark Bravo: Bianca brought Platinum Society.

A beat.

Mark Bravo: Emily brought Thanksgiving.

The Chevy rolls to a stop near the stage.

Emily kills the engine.

She grabs the Hardcore Championship.

Then, before getting out, Emily reaches into the truck and retrieves an energy drink.

John Phillips: Really?

Mark Bravo: Hydration is important.

John Phillips: That's not hydration.

Mark Bravo: Motivation is important.

Emily pushes open the driver's door and hops down.

The Hardcore Championship goes over her shoulder.

She cracks her neck.

Then takes a long drink.

David climbs out next.

Buck emerges from the truck looking considerably less interested in ceremony.

Dakota steps out last, composed and smiling faintly as she surveys the arena.

Emily closes the truck door.

She looks toward the ring.

And sees Bianca.

Then Ace.

Then Scythe.

Emily takes another drink.

She lowers the can.

A grin spreads across her face.

Emily Hightower: Well, shit.

David looks toward ringside.

Buck looks toward ringside.

Dakota looks toward ringside.

Then all four Hightowers begin walking.

John Phillips: Emily Hightower is the defending Hardcore Champion, and we've talked extensively about what that championship means to her. She did not appreciate Bianca Page treating this match like some kind of consolation prize.

Mark Bravo: Emily gave Bianca exactly what Bianca asked for. A championship match. Bianca's the one who didn't read the fine print.

John Phillips: There isn't much fine print tonight. Hardcore rules. Anything goes.

Mark Bravo: And that's why everybody you're looking at right now is completely legal.

The camera cuts to Platinum Society.

Bianca has moved toward the ropes.

Ace's expression has changed considerably.

He looks at Emily.

David.

Buck.

Dakota.

Then Ace slowly turns his head toward Samuel Scythe.

Three members of Platinum Society.

Four Hightowers.

John Phillips: The numbers advantage certainly isn't what Platinum Society expected.

Mark Bravo: You sure about that?

John Phillips: They're outnumbered four to three.

Mark Bravo: I'm looking at Ace, John. Ace understands math.

Ace says something quietly to Scythe.

Scythe doesn't respond.

His eyes have settled on Buck Hightower.

Buck notices.

Buck stares back.

Neither man says anything.

Something passes between them anyway.

John Phillips: That's Samuel Scythe staring at Buck Hightower.

Mark Bravo: Yep.

John Phillips: You don't sound particularly surprised.

Mark Bravo: Because everybody else is looking at this situation and seeing a numbers problem.

The camera moves closer to Scythe.

For the first time since arriving at ringside, something changes in the Fighting Champion's expression.

Not concern.

Interest.

Mark Bravo: I think Samuel Scythe just found something to do.

The Hightowers reach ringside.

Emily stops.

Her family stops with her.

Platinum Society stands on the opposite side.

For several seconds, nobody moves.

The match hasn't even started.

Already, there are seven people surrounding the ring.

John Phillips: We need to remind everyone again that none of this violates the rules. There are no disqualifications.

Mark Bravo: Stop saying that like you're warning them.

John Phillips: I'm warning us.

Emily looks across the ring at Bianca.

Bianca gestures toward herself and motions for Emily to come inside.

Emily chuckles.

She takes one final drink from the energy drink.

Then tosses the empty can over her shoulder.

Buck catches it without looking.

He crushes it in one hand and drops it.

Mark Bravo: Okay, that was unnecessarily cool.

Emily hands the Hardcore Championship to the referee through the ropes.

She starts toward the ring steps.

Then stops.

Emily looks underneath the ring.

The crowd immediately gets louder.

John Phillips: Emily...

She reaches beneath the apron.

And pulls out a baking sheet.

The arena erupts.

Emily looks at it.

Then at Bianca.

Bianca closes her eyes.

Even Ace shakes his head.

Emily taps the baking sheet against the ring post.

CLANG!

The crowd cheers.

Emily nods appreciatively.

Emily Hightower: Still funny.

Mark Bravo: She's right.

John Phillips: We're not doing this all night.

Mark Bravo: Depends how many times she hits Bianca with it.

Emily slides the baking sheet into the ring.

Then she climbs onto the apron and steps through the ropes.

Bianca immediately backs toward her corner.

Emily doesn't pursue her.

Not yet.

Instead, Emily walks into the middle of the ring and looks around Crypto.com Arena.

The crowd roars for her.

Emily raises one arm.

The Hardcore Championship is brought toward the center of the ring.

Emily looks at it.

Then she looks at Bianca.

Her expression changes.

The smile remains.

But there's considerably less humor in it now.

John Phillips: Emily Hightower told Bianca Page eight days ago that if she was going to challenge for that championship, she needed to understand what it meant.

Mark Bravo: Bianca gave her the answer Emily wanted.

John Phillips: "Next Saturday I'm taking it."

Mark Bravo: Well, Saturday's here.

The referee raises the UTA Hardcore Championship overhead.

Bianca watches it.

Emily watches Bianca.

Outside the ring, the pieces are already arranging themselves.

Ace Andrews stands in Bianca's corner.

Samuel Scythe stands several feet away.

David Hightower takes his place opposite them.

Dakota remains near her sister's corner.

Buck hasn't moved.

Neither has Scythe.

The two men continue staring at one another across ringside.

John Phillips: This is supposed to be Bianca Page versus Emily Hightower.

Mark Bravo: It is.

John Phillips: I'm starting to think we're going to have trouble keeping it that way.

Mark Bravo: John...

Scythe slowly rolls his neck.

Buck flexes his hands.

Mark Bravo: Nobody has to keep it that way.

The referee hands the championship to ringside.

Emily bends down.

She picks up the baking sheet.

Bianca looks at it.

Then at Emily.

Emily smiles.

Bianca glances toward the ropes.

Ace gives her an encouraging nod.

Scythe doesn't even look at her.

He's still staring at Buck.

Emily raises the baking sheet.

Bianca braces herself.

The referee looks between them.

Then calls for the bell.

DING! DING! DING!

Emily doesn't hesitate.

The bell has barely finished ringing before she charges across the ring with the baking sheet raised overhead.

Bianca immediately bails through the ropes.

Mark Bravo: Strategic retreat!

John Phillips: The match started three seconds ago!

Mark Bravo: And Bianca Page has successfully avoided being hit with cookware for all three of them. Perfect strategy so far.

Bianca lands beside Ace Andrews and immediately points into the ring.

Bianca Page: Are you kidding me?!

Emily leans over the top rope.

She raises the baking sheet.

Emily Hightower: You asked for it!

Bianca turns toward Ace.

Ace starts talking her down, reminding Bianca that she knew exactly what this match was going to be.

Behind them, Samuel Scythe remains completely uninterested in the conversation.

His attention remains across the ring.

Buck Hightower.

Buck notices.

Again.

John Phillips: I don't like what's developing between those two.

Mark Bravo: You mean the two men whose personalities can basically be summarized as "hit it harder?" What could possibly happen?

Bianca finally turns back toward the ring.

Emily is waiting.

She taps the baking sheet against her palm.

Bianca circles around ringside instead.

Emily follows her from inside the ring.

Bianca stops.

Emily stops.

Bianca takes two steps left.

Emily follows.

Bianca changes direction.

Emily does the same.

Mark Bravo: She's herding her.

John Phillips: Emily knows Bianca eventually has to engage.

Mark Bravo: Technically she doesn't. We could be here until Tuesday.

Bianca suddenly reaches underneath the ring.

The crowd reacts.

Emily's eyebrows rise.

Bianca comes back up with a kendo stick.

Now she smiles.

Mark Bravo: THERE we go!

Bianca slides into the ring.

Emily immediately swings the baking sheet.

Bianca blocks it with the kendo stick.

CLANG!

The crowd pops.

Emily swings again.

CLANG!

Bianca blocks it again.

Emily swings a third time.

Bianca ducks.

The sheet whistles over her head.

Bianca cracks the kendo stick across Emily's ribs.

CRACK!

Emily recoils.

Bianca hits her again.

CRACK!

Emily backs toward the ropes.

Bianca takes a running start and swings for the chest—

Emily throws the baking sheet directly into Bianca's face.

CLANG!

Bianca drops the kendo stick and stumbles backward.

Mark Bravo: FUNNY NOISE!

John Phillips: Bianca Page may disagree!

Emily grabs the sheet off the mat.

Bianca turns around.

CLANG!

Right across the back.

Bianca arches forward.

Emily raises it again.

CLANG!

Again.

The baking sheet now has a Bianca-shaped dent in the middle of it.

Emily looks down at the damage.

She seems genuinely disappointed.

Emily Hightower: Aw, hell.

She tosses it aside.

Mark Bravo: And there goes the first casualty of Ring King.

John Phillips: The baking sheet?

Mark Bravo: It had a family, John.

Emily grabs Bianca by the hair and pulls her upright.

Bianca answers immediately with a forearm to the jaw.

Emily fires one back.

Bianca strikes again.

Emily again.

Bianca.

Emily.

The exchange gets faster until Emily finally drives a knee into Bianca's midsection and throws her through the ropes to the floor.

Bianca lands hard near Ace.

Emily follows.

The moment Emily's boots touch the floor, Ace steps backward.

Emily notices.

She slowly turns her head toward him.

Ace raises both hands.

Ace Andrews: I'm just observing.

Emily looks around.

Emily Hightower: Ain't no rules.

Ace's expression changes.

Mark Bravo: Emily makes an excellent legal argument.

Ace backs away another step.

Emily starts toward him—

Bianca explodes from behind with a forearm across Emily's upper back.

Emily crashes chest-first into the barricade.

John Phillips: And that's exactly what Bianca needed!

Bianca grabs Emily by the back of the head and drives her into the barricade again.

Then again.

Emily drops to a knee.

Bianca doesn't waste the opening.

She grabs Emily and sends her shoulder-first into the steel ring steps.

The top section breaks loose from the impact.

Emily spills onto the floor.

Bianca stands over her, breathing heavily.

Now the smile is gone.

This isn't Bianca recoiling from Emily's world anymore.

She's starting to participate in it.

John Phillips: That's the change Emily wanted to see eight days ago. Bianca Page finally understood that if she was going to fight for the Hardcore Championship, she couldn't treat it like something beneath her.

Mark Bravo: Bianca's cerebral. She's opportunistic. Give her a rulebook and she'll find every loophole in it. Take the rulebook away completely?

Bianca looks at the displaced ring steps.

Mark Bravo: Apparently she'll just hit you with the building.

Bianca grabs the separated top half of the steps.

She lifts them.

Emily starts getting up.

Bianca charges—

Emily moves!

The steps smash into the barricade.

Bianca loses her grip.

Emily grabs her around the waist from behind.

She lifts.

Bianca desperately elbows backward once.

Twice.

Three times.

Emily's grip breaks.

Bianca spins—

SUPERKICK!

Swanky catches Emily squarely under the jaw.

Emily falls backward against the apron.

Bianca quickly grabs her and rolls her underneath the bottom rope.

She slides in behind her.

Cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Emily powers out.

John Phillips: First cover of the match, and Bianca Page gets two!

Bianca doesn't complain.

She immediately gets back up.

That alone tells the story.

She knows this isn't going to end easily.

Bianca looks outside toward Ace.

Ace gestures beneath the ring.

Bianca understands.

She rolls back out.

Emily pushes herself onto her elbows.

Bianca reaches beneath the apron.

She pulls out a steel chair.

The crowd gets louder.

Then another.

She slides both into the ring.

Bianca reaches underneath again.

A trash can.

Into the ring.

Then a length of chain.

Mark Bravo: Oh, she's shopping now.

John Phillips: Bianca is bringing everything she can find into the ring.

Mark Bravo: Emily brought the groceries. Bianca brought the cart.

Bianca slides inside.

Emily is getting up.

Bianca grabs the trash can.

She drives it into Emily's stomach.

Emily doubles over.

Bianca places the can over Emily's upper body.

John Phillips: Emily can't see!

Bianca backs into the ropes.

She rebounds.

HIGH KNEE!

Binx crushes the trash can against Emily's head and chest.

Emily falls backward with the mangled can still partially wrapped around her.

Bianca rips it away.

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

TH—

Emily kicks out!

Bianca sits upright.

This time there's a flash of frustration.

Ace immediately calls to her from outside.

Ace Andrews: Stay on her!

Bianca nods.

She grabs one of the chairs.

Emily rolls onto her stomach.

Bianca raises the chair high—

Emily suddenly grabs Bianca's ankle.
She yanks.
Bianca crashes face-first onto the mat, losing the chair.
Emily crawls on top of her.
And starts throwing punches.
One after another.
No finesse.
No separation.
Bianca covers up.
Emily grabs her wrist.
She twists the fingers backward.
Bianca screams.
John Phillips: Finger crank! Emily has Bianca's hand!
Bianca desperately reaches with her free hand.
There are no ropes that can save her.
No break to demand.
So Bianca grabs the chain.
She swings it wildly.
The chain catches Emily across the side of the head.
Emily releases immediately and rolls away.
Bianca clutches her hand.
Then looks at the chain.
Emily looks back at her.
Bianca wraps part of the chain around her fist.
Mark Bravo: Okay.
John Phillips: Bianca Page is wrapping that chain around her hand.
Mark Bravo: Yeah, we're officially past baking sheets now.
Emily rises.
Bianca swings.
Emily ducks.
Bianca turns—
Emily tackles her through the ropes.
Both women crash to the floor.

The crowd erupts.

Emily lands on top and immediately starts throwing punches again.

Bianca answers from underneath.

The two women roll across the floor, trading shots as the chain falls loose beside them.

Ace moves closer.

David does too.

Dakota shifts around the corner.

Buck steps forward.

Samuel Scythe steps forward at exactly the same time.

Both stop.

They are now only a few feet apart.

Emily and Bianca continue fighting behind them.

Neither Buck nor Scythe looks away from the other.

John Phillips: Here we go.

Mark Bravo: Not yet.

Buck takes another step.

Scythe takes one.

David calls something toward Buck.

Ace says something toward Scythe.

Neither man responds.

Then Bianca sends Emily backward into the barricade.

The impact sends Emily stumbling directly toward Scythe.

Scythe catches Bianca's opponent instinctively by the shoulder—

Buck immediately moves.

He shoves Scythe's hand away from his sister.

The entire ringside area freezes.

Scythe looks down at Buck's hand.

Then up at Buck.

Buck doesn't move.

John Phillips: Buck Hightower just put his hands on Samuel Scythe.

Mark Bravo: Yep.

Scythe's jaw tightens.

Buck squares his shoulders.

Ace starts toward them.

David does the same.

Dakota watches carefully from the opposite side.

And Samuel Scythe...

smiles.

Not broadly.

Not happily.

Just enough.

Mark Bravo: Oh, that's bad.

John Phillips: For who?

Mark Bravo: Everybody.

Buck throws the first punch.

Scythe absorbs it.

And fires one back.

Buck answers.

Scythe answers harder.

Within seconds the two men are hammering one another beside the ring.

John Phillips: AND HERE WE GO!

David immediately grabs Scythe from behind.

Scythe throws an elbow backward and breaks loose.

Buck tackles him into the barricade.

The barricade shifts several inches from the impact.

Ace rushes toward the fight—

Dakota steps directly into his path.

She smiles pleasantly.

Ace stops.

Dakota tilts her head.

Ace thinks better of it.

Mark Bravo: Smartest decision Ace Andrews has made all night.

Meanwhile, Bianca and Emily haven't stopped fighting.

Bianca grabs Emily and whips her toward the ring post.

Emily reverses.

Bianca crashes shoulder-first into steel.

Emily grabs her and rolls her back into the ring.

Behind them, Scythe grabs Buck and hurls him into the barricade.

David attacks Scythe immediately.

Scythe turns and blasts David with a forearm.

Dakota abandons Ace and joins her family.

She jumps onto Scythe's back.

John Phillips: The entire Hightower family is going after Samuel Scythe!

Scythe reaches behind himself.

He grabs Dakota and pulls her forward over his shoulder, but she lands on her feet and immediately drives a kick into the side of his knee.

Buck comes charging back.

Scythe meets him head-on.

Now it's chaos.

David.

Buck.

Dakota.

All three Hightowers are fighting Samuel Scythe.

And somehow...

Scythe looks more alive than he has all night.

Mark Bravo: LOOK AT HIM!

John Phillips: Scythe is outnumbered three to one!

Mark Bravo: I don't think he cares!

Scythe throws Buck into the barricade.

David clubs him from behind.

Scythe turns and drives David backward.

Dakota strikes from the side.

Buck comes back again.

The fight begins moving away from ringside.

Up the aisle.

Scythe and Buck trade punches while walking backward toward the stage.

David follows and joins in.

Dakota circles around them, looking for openings and striking whenever one appears.

Scythe keeps coming.

He could retreat.

He doesn't.

He could break away.

He doesn't.

He drives straight into all three of them.

John Phillips: Samuel Scythe has a Fighting Championship defense later tonight!

Mark Bravo: You think he remembers that right now?!

The brawl reaches the stage.

Buck and Scythe disappear through the entrance first, still throwing punches.

David follows.

Dakota disappears after them.

The camera catches one final glimpse of Scythe driving Buck into a production case backstage before all four vanish from sight.

John Phillips: They're gone!

Mark Bravo: Somewhere backstage, Samuel Scythe is fighting an entire family!

John Phillips: And somehow that leaves the numbers even!

The camera returns to ringside.

Ace Andrews stands alone outside the ring.

He looks toward the entrance where Scythe disappeared.

Then toward the ring.

Then back toward the entrance.

Ace exhales.

Mark Bravo: Ace just lost his security deposit.

Inside the ring, Emily Hightower and Bianca Page are back on their feet.

They look briefly toward the entrance.

Emily sees that her family is gone.

Bianca sees that Scythe is gone.

Then they look at each other.

Emily shrugs.

Bianca does the same.

And both women immediately grab steel chairs.

John Phillips: We're not even close to finished!

Mark Bravo: Good.

Emily raises hers.

Bianca raises hers.

They swing.

CLANG!

Steel meets steel in the center of the ring.

The impact rattles both women's arms.

Emily and Bianca recoil.

Then they swing again.

CLANG!

Again.

CLANG!

Neither chair connects with flesh. Each woman keeps catching the other's weapon in mid-swing, turning the center of the ring into a violent steel stalemate.

Bianca changes tactics first.

She kicks Emily in the knee.

Emily buckles.

Bianca swings—

Emily ducks!

The chair misses.

Emily drives the edge of her own chair into Bianca's stomach.

Bianca doubles over.

Emily throws her chair down flat.

She grabs Bianca by the head.

Bianca realizes what's coming and immediately starts fighting.

Forearm to Emily's ribs.

Another.

A third breaks Emily's grip.

Bianca snaps upright and drives a knee into Emily's face.

Emily staggers backward.

Bianca grabs her.

SNAP DDT!

Emily's head is driven into the chair!

John Phillips: Good God!

Emily rolls onto her back, clutching at her head.

Bianca immediately covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

Emily gets a shoulder up!

Bianca slaps the mat once.

Not a tantrum.

Frustration.

She looks down at Emily, then toward the collection of weapons scattered around them.

John Phillips: Bianca Page is getting closer.

Mark Bravo: That's the dangerous thing about Bianca. She isn't trying to prove she's tougher than Emily. She's trying to figure out what works.

Bianca gets to her feet and grabs the second steel chair.

She opens it.

Places it upright near the center of the ring.

Then she grabs Emily.

Emily is dragged to her feet.

Bianca hooks her head.

She looks toward the chair.

John Phillips: Whatever Bianca is thinking here, Emily needs to get out of it.

Bianca tries to lift—

Emily blocks.

Bianca tries again.

Emily blocks again.

Then Emily explodes upward and sends Bianca over with a suplex!

Bianca lands hard beside the chair rather than on it.

Emily stays down for a moment.

Both women breathe heavily.

Outside the ring, Ace Andrews pounds the apron.

Ace Andrews: Bianca! Up!

Bianca crawls toward the ropes.

Emily pushes herself up.

Bianca reaches her feet first and charges.

Emily catches her.

She lifts Bianca and drives her backward into the turnbuckles.

Emily backs away.

Then charges.

SPLASH!

Bianca is crushed into the corner.

Emily immediately runs toward the opposite ropes.

She rebounds.

BIG BOOT!

Hit And Run sends Bianca spilling out of the corner.

Emily covers.

ONE!

TWO!

Bianca kicks out!

Emily doesn't waste time arguing.

She rolls underneath the bottom rope.

Mark Bravo: Shopping trip number two.

Emily lifts the ring skirt.

She reaches underneath.

And pulls out a table.

Crypto.com Arena erupts.

John Phillips: Of course.

Mark Bravo: Now we're cooking.

Emily slides the table beneath the bottom rope.

Ace immediately moves closer.

Emily sees him.

She stops.

Ace stops.

They stare at one another.

Emily slowly reaches beneath the ring again.

This time she produces a kendo stick.

Ace backs up.

Mark Bravo: Still undefeated in good decisions tonight.

Emily tosses the kendo stick into the ring and slides back inside.

She begins setting up the table.

Bianca crawls toward the opposite corner.

Emily gets the legs locked into place.

She turns—

Bianca throws the trash can at her.

Emily instinctively catches it.

Bianca comes charging behind it.

SPEAR!

Bianca drives Emily backward with the trash can trapped between them!

The can collapses against Emily's abdomen as both women hit the mat.

Bianca throws the mangled metal aside.

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

TH—

Emily kicks out!

Bianca rolls onto her back and stares at the lights.

John Phillips: Again! Emily Hightower survives!

Mark Bravo: But every time Emily survives, Bianca learns something.

Bianca sits up.

Her eyes settle on the table.

Then Emily.

She smiles.

Mark Bravo: And I think she just learned what she wants to try next.

Bianca pulls Emily upright.

She drags her toward the table.

Emily throws a punch.

Bianca answers.

Emily throws another.

Bianca rakes her across the eyes.

Perfectly legal.

Emily staggers.

Bianca places her onto the table.

John Phillips: Bianca has Emily on the table!

Bianca throws another forearm to keep her there.

Then Bianca looks toward the corner.

The audience rises.

Bianca climbs onto the apron.

She steps through the ropes near the corner and begins ascending the turnbuckles.

Ace watches from below, urging her higher.

Bianca reaches the top.

She stands.

Emily remains stretched across the table.

Bianca steadies herself.

Then leaps.

John Phillips: MAJESTIC!

EMILY MOVES!

Bianca crashes elbow-first through the table!

The table explodes beneath her.

The crowd comes unglued.

Mark Bravo: NOBODY HOME!

Bianca lies among the broken wood.

Ace grabs his head.

Emily crawls away from the wreckage.

She pulls herself upright using the ropes.

Bianca isn't moving.

Emily sees her.

She sees the opening.

Emily crosses the ring and drops over Bianca.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

BIANCA KICKS OUT!

The arena reacts with a mixture of cheers and disbelief.

Emily sits up.

She looks at the referee.

The referee confirms two.

Emily nods.

John Phillips: Bianca Page just survived her own crash through that table!

Mark Bravo: That's what Emily wanted, isn't it? She wanted Bianca to understand what this championship requires.

Bianca slowly rolls away from the broken table.

Mark Bravo: I think she understands now.

Emily reaches down.

Bianca suddenly grabs a broken piece of the table and jams it into Emily's ribs.

Emily recoils.

Bianca swings the fragment again.

It cracks across Emily's thigh.

Bianca pulls herself upright.

Emily charges—

Bianca sidesteps her and sends Emily shoulder-first through the ropes.

Emily lands hard on the floor.

Bianca follows.

She grabs Emily by the hair and pulls her toward the announce position.

John Phillips: Bianca, don't bring this over here.

Mark Bravo: Why not? Best seats in the house.

John Phillips: Because we're sitting in them!

Bianca slams Emily face-first into the announce desk.

Emily staggers.

Bianca does it again.

Emily drops against the desk.

Bianca climbs onto the barricade.

John Phillips: What is she doing?

Bianca balances herself.

She leaps—

Emily catches her!

Bianca's eyes widen.

Emily holds her across her body.

Then throws her across the announce desk!

Bianca crashes through monitors and papers, rolling across the tabletop and spilling onto the floor behind Bravo and Phillips.

Both commentators scramble away.

Mark Bravo: SHE TOUCHED MY WATER!

John Phillips: Your water?!

Mark Bravo: It was unopened!

Emily climbs onto the desk.

Bianca is trying to stand behind it.

Emily launches herself off.

CRASH LANDING!

The flipping rebound moonsault wipes Bianca out on the floor!

The audience erupts.

Emily rolls away clutching her ribs.

Bianca is flat on her back.

John Phillips: That's what separates Emily Hightower from so many brawlers! She can beat you in a fight, but she has athleticism that you simply don't expect from someone who fights the way she does!

Emily slowly rises.

She grabs Bianca and drags her back toward the ring.

Ace circles closer.

Emily sees him again.

This time she doesn't warn him.

She grabs Ace by the tie.

The crowd explodes.

John Phillips: Emily's got Ace!

Ace immediately grabs her wrist.

Ace Andrews: Now, Emily—

Bianca attacks from behind!

Forearm to the back of Emily's head.

Emily releases Ace.

Bianca grabs Emily and drives her face-first into the ring post.

Emily crumples.

Ace straightens his tie.

Bianca looks at him.

Ace gives her a nod.

John Phillips: Ace Andrews didn't technically interfere there—

Mark Bravo: Doesn't matter if he did!

John Phillips: I know that!

Mark Bravo: I'm just enjoying how useless that sentence becomes in a Hardcore Match.

Bianca rolls Emily back inside.

She follows quickly.

Emily is on hands and knees.

Bianca runs.

BINX!

The high knee snaps Emily backward.

Bianca hooks both legs.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

NO!

Emily kicks out again!

Bianca pounds the mat.

This time the frustration is unmistakable.

She gets up.

Grabs the chain.

Then looks at Emily.

Bianca wraps the chain around Emily's throat.

John Phillips: Bianca's choking her!

Emily immediately claws at the chain.

Bianca plants a knee between Emily's shoulder blades and pulls backward.

There is no referee count.

No five-count.

No rope break.

Nothing to force Bianca to stop.

Emily's face begins turning red.

John Phillips: This is the danger of this stipulation! Emily has to escape on her own!

Emily reaches backward.

Can't find Bianca.

She reaches toward the mat.

Her hand finds the kendo stick.

Emily grabs it.

She swings blindly over her shoulder.

CRACK!

The stick catches Bianca in the side of the head.

Bianca releases immediately.

Emily falls forward, coughing and dragging air back into her lungs.

Bianca stumbles into the corner.

Emily looks at the kendo stick.

Then Bianca.

Emily rises.

CRACK!

Across Bianca's stomach.

CRACK!

Across the thigh.

CRACK!

Across the back.

Bianca drops to her knees.

Emily throws the stick aside.

She pulls Bianca up.

BURN OUT!

The tornado double-arm DDT plants Bianca into the mat.

Emily covers!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

BIANCA GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

Emily rolls onto her knees.

She exhales.

Then laughs.

Not because anything is funny.

Because this is exactly the fight she demanded Bianca give her.

Mark Bravo: Look at Emily.

John Phillips: Bianca has pushed the Hardcore Champion much further than Emily may have expected.

Mark Bravo: And Emily loves it.

Emily gets back to her feet.

She looks around the wreckage.

Broken table.

Dented trash can.

Steel chairs.

Kendo stick.

Chain.

Then she sees something else.

The crowd begins to change.

Not a roar.

A murmur.

Emily notices it.

Bianca doesn't.

Neither does Ace at first.

Emily looks toward the entrance.

Someone has stepped onto the stage.

Sol Azteca.

John Phillips: Wait a minute.

Mark Bravo: Sol?

Sol stands at the top of the entrance way.

No weapon.

No microphone.

No rush toward the ring.

She simply stands there.

Watching.

John Phillips: Sol Azteca is out here, but she's making absolutely no move toward the ring.

Mark Bravo: She doesn't have to. Emily's already seen her.

Emily stares toward the stage.

Confusion first.

Then suspicion.

Eight days ago, Emily spoke to Sol before Sol's semifinal against Mikey Unlikely.

Weeks before that, Emily had involved herself in Sol's match against Bianca to settle her own score.

Now Sol is here.

But she does nothing.

Sol's arms remain at her sides.

She simply watches.

Emily takes a step toward the ropes.

Emily Hightower: What're you doin'?

Sol doesn't answer.

She doesn't approach.

She doesn't even gesture.

John Phillips: Sol isn't interfering!

Mark Bravo: No. But Emily needs to stop worrying about why she's here.

Behind Emily, Bianca Page begins to rise.

Ace sees it.

He sees Emily staring toward Sol.

And he says nothing.

Bianca gets one knee underneath herself.

Then the other.

Emily remains focused on Sol.

Mark Bravo: Emily!

Bianca is standing.

Emily finally turns—

SWANKY!

The superkick catches Emily flush.

Emily staggers backward into the ropes.

Bianca doesn't stop.

She pulls Emily forward.

LAVISH LIFESTYLE!

The Blockbuster drives Emily into the mat.

Bianca immediately rolls through and heads for the corner.

John Phillips: Bianca has her!

Bianca climbs.

Emily isn't moving.

Bianca reaches the top rope.

She looks toward Emily.

Then toward Sol.

For the briefest moment, Bianca smiles.

She launches.

PURE ELEGANCE!

The corkscrew moonsault lands perfectly across Emily Hightower.

Bianca hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

DING! DING! DING!

Crypto.com Arena erupts with a mixture of cheers, boos and stunned reaction.

Bianca Page rolls away from Emily and lies flat on her back.

For a moment, she doesn't even celebrate.

She's exhausted.

Bruised.

Surrounded by wreckage.

But she's won.

John Phillips: Bianca Page has done it! Bianca Page is the Hardcore Champion!

Mark Bravo: And Sol Azteca never touched anybody!

John Phillips: She never approached the ring! She never interfered! She simply appeared, and Emily Hightower took her eyes off Bianca Page!

Mark Bravo: Three seconds, John. That's all it takes. Emily warned Sol about that exact thing before the semifinal. Tonight Emily forgot her own lesson.

Ace slides into the ring.

The Hardcore Championship is handed in.

Ace takes it first.

He looks down at the gold.

Then at Bianca.

He kneels beside her.

Bianca pushes herself upright.

Ace places the UTA Hardcore Championship into her hands.

Bianca stares at it.

The championship she initially treated like a consolation prize.

The championship Emily told her she needed to understand.

Bianca looks down at the bruises already forming across her body.

At the broken table.

At the twisted trash can.

At the chair beside her.

Then back at the championship.

Bianca starts laughing.

She gets to her feet.

Slowly.

Painfully.

Ace helps steady her.

Bianca pulls the Hardcore Championship against her chest.

Then raises it overhead.

John Phillips: Whatever Bianca Page thought this championship was eight days ago, she earned it tonight.

Mark Bravo: Absolutely. Sol distracted Emily by existing, but Sol didn't hit Emily. She didn't help Bianca up. She didn't hand Bianca a weapon. Bianca still had to survive Emily Hightower and finish the job herself.

On the stage, Sol watches Bianca raise the championship.

There is no celebration from her.

No smile.

Her attention shifts toward Emily.

Emily is sitting against the bottom turnbuckle now.

She touches her jaw.

Then looks toward Sol.

Sol meets her eyes.

Neither woman says anything.

Emily's expression asks the question anyway.

Why?

Sol remains there for another moment.

Then turns.

And walks backstage.

Emily watches her disappear.

John Phillips: I don't know why Sol Azteca came out here.

Mark Bravo: Neither does Emily.

Bianca climbs onto the middle turnbuckle with Ace beside her.

She raises the Hardcore Championship again.

John Phillips: But we do know this: "Classy" Bianca Page came to Los Angeles looking for her first UTA championship.

Bianca looks down at the title.

Then toward the camera.

Her battered face breaks into an exhausted, arrogant smile.

John Phillips: And she found it.

Still Fighting

Segment

The broadcast cuts backstage.

And apparently nobody told Samuel Scythe or the Hightowers that the Hardcore Championship match is over.

A loud crash echoes through the corridor as Buck Hightower slams Scythe backward into a stack of production cases.

Scythe hits hard.

He comes right back.

A forearm catches Buck across the jaw.

Buck answers with one of his own.

Scythe fires another.

Buck does the same.

Neither man gives an inch.

Several feet away, David Hightower is being restrained by two UTA officials.

Dakota Hightower stands nearby, considerably calmer than everybody else but no less prepared to jump straight back into the fight if necessary.

David Hightower: LET 'EM GO!

That is not particularly helpful.

More UTA personnel flood into the hallway.

Buck drives a shoulder into Scythe and sends both men crashing against the wall.

Scythe clubs him across the back.

Buck answers with a shot to the ribs.

Scythe drives a knee into Buck's stomach.

Officials finally wedge themselves between them.

It takes several.

Scythe is dragged backward.

Buck is pulled in the opposite direction.

Buck Hightower: LET GO!

Scythe doesn't say anything.

His hair is disheveled.

His gear has been pulled out of place.

There is a small line of blood at the corner of his mouth.

His chest rises and falls heavily.

And Samuel Scythe is smiling.

Not the small hint of one we saw at ringside.

This one is unmistakable.

He enjoyed that.

David notices.

David Hightower: What's so damn funny?

Scythe wipes the blood from his mouth with the back of his hand.

He looks at it.

Then back at the Hightowers.

Another voice comes from behind the camera.

Ace Andrews: Samuel!

Ace Andrews rounds the corner.

The newly crowned UTA Hardcore Champion is nowhere to be seen, presumably being attended to after the war she just survived.

Ace takes one look at the hallway.

The production cases.

The officials.

The Hightowers.

Then Scythe.

Ace closes his eyes for a moment.

Ace Andrews: Of course.

He walks toward Scythe.

Ace Andrews: Samuel.

Scythe continues looking past him at Buck.

Ace Andrews: Samuel.

Nothing.

Ace steps directly into Scythe's line of sight.

Ace Andrews: You have a championship match tonight.

That finally gets Scythe's attention.

Ace Andrews: Savior Hawkins. Fighting Championship. Remember?

Scythe looks down at Ace.

Then his eyes drift past him again.

Buck is still staring back.

Ace Andrews: Samuel.

Scythe reaches up and wipes another trace of blood from his lip.

Samuel Scythe: I remember.

Ace studies him.

Ace Andrews: Good.

Ace points down the opposite hallway.

Ace Andrews: Then we're done here.

Scythe doesn't move.

Ace waits.

Finally, Scythe takes one step backward.

Then another.

Officials cautiously release some of their grip.

Buck takes a step forward.

Three officials immediately tighten around him again.

Scythe sees it.

That smile returns.

Samuel Scythe: You reap what you sow.

Buck wipes his mouth with his forearm.

Buck Hightower: Any time.

Scythe's smile disappears.

Not because he dislikes the answer.

Quite the opposite.

Ace places a hand against Scythe's chest and starts directing him away.

This time Scythe allows it.

As they disappear down the corridor, Ace can be heard speaking.

Ace Andrews: We already got one championship tonight. I'd prefer not to lose another because you decided to fight an entire family.

Scythe's voice answers from farther down the hall.

Samuel Scythe: They started it.

Ace stops walking.

There is a beat.

Ace Andrews: You're twenty-six years old.

They disappear around the corner.

The camera remains with the Hightowers.

Dakota looks toward Buck.

Buck is still staring down the empty hallway.

David finally pulls himself free of the officials.

David Hightower: Everybody good?

Dakota nods.

Buck rolls his shoulder.

Buck Hightower: Yep.

David looks toward the direction Scythe disappeared.

David Hightower: That boy ain't right.

Dakota smiles faintly.

Dakota Hightower: Daddy...

She looks between David and Buck.

Dakota Hightower: Neither are we.

David considers that.

David Hightower: Fair.

The camera fades away as UTA personnel finally begin clearing the hallway.

The Final Opportunity

Segment

The camera cuts backstage.

Silence.

Hakuryu stands in the center of his private locker room.

The United States Championship rests across his shoulder.

His white pilgrimage garments are immaculate.

His face is expressionless.

Sinja kneels several feet behind him.

Head lowered.

Neither man speaks.

Hakuryu slowly closes his eyes.

His hands come together.

A quiet prayer escapes his lips.

Too low for the camera to understand.

Sinja waits.

Finally, Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Hakuryu: ????????????????????

Sinja raises his head.

Sinja: "Last week, my master gave me one command."

Hakuryu: ????????

Sinja: "Do nothing."

Hakuryu turns.

His eyes settle on his disciple.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????

Sinja: "Jed Eye was there."

Hakuryu: ??????????????????

Sinja: "And I did nothing."

Hakuryu: ??????????????????

Sinja: "He stood within my reach."

Hakuryu: ??????????????????

Sinja pauses.

There is considerably more weight behind this translation.

Sinja: "And still... I did nothing."

Hakuryu begins walking toward him.

Slowly.

Hakuryu: ????????????

Sinja: "Yoshii put his hands on my master."

Hakuryu: ??????????

Sinja's eyes lower.

Sinja: "I moved."

Hakuryu stops directly in front of him.

Hakuryu: ????????????

Sinja: "But I stopped."

Hakuryu looks down at Sinja.

A long silence follows.

Then Hakuryu gives a single nod.

Hakuryu: ??????????

Sinja looks up.

Almost surprised.

Sinja: "Master says..."

He hesitates.

Sinja: "...I did well."

Hakuryu immediately continues.

Hakuryu: ??????????

Whatever satisfaction had started to appear on Sinja's face disappears.

Sinja: "But I am not to be proud."

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????????????

Sinja: "A disciple does not deserve praise simply because he obeyed his master."

Hakuryu turns away.

He adjusts the United States Championship on his shoulder.

Hakuryu: ??????????????

Sinja: "It is expected."

Sinja bows his head again.

Sinja: "Yes, Master."

Hakuryu stops.

Hakuryu: ??????

Sinja immediately rises.

Hakuryu turns toward him.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????????

Sinja: "Last week, I asked my master about Los Angeles."

Hakuryu: ??????????????

Sinja: "About my final opportunity."

Hakuryu takes one deliberate step toward Sinja.

Hakuryu: ??????????

Sinja's posture changes.

Sinja: "That time has come."

The room becomes silent again.

Sinja waits for the instruction.

None comes.

Finally...

Sinja: "Master..."

Hakuryu stares at him.

Sinja: "What would you have me do?"

Hakuryu's eyes narrow.

Hakuryu: ????????????

Sinja's expression changes.

Sinja: "He asks..."

A pause.

Sinja: "...if I still do not understand."

Hakuryu steps closer.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja: "My master ordered me to finish Jed Eye."

Hakuryu: ????????????

Sinja: "I failed."

Hakuryu: ????????????????????

Sinja: "Then my master ordered me to do nothing."

Hakuryu: ????????????

Sinja: "And I obeyed."

Hakuryu's voice lowers.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja takes a moment before translating.

Sinja: "But obedience..."

He looks directly at his master.

Sinja: "...is not understanding."

Hakuryu nods once.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja: "Tonight, I will stand outside the ring as Hakuryu's disciple."

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja: "Jed Eye will be there."

Hakuryu: ??????????????

Sinja: "Yoshii will be there."

Hakuryu places one hand against the United States Championship.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????

Sinja: "And my master will defeat Yoshii."

Hakuryu looks directly into Sinja's eyes.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja doesn't translate immediately.

He studies Hakuryu.

Searching his face for an answer.

Hakuryu gives him none.

Sinja: "When the moment comes..."

A beat.

Sinja: "...I am expected to know what must be done."

Hakuryu nods.

Sinja takes a slow breath.

Sinja: "And if I choose incorrectly?"

Hakuryu doesn't blink.

Hakuryu: ????????

Sinja goes completely still.

Sinja: "Strike two."

Hakuryu raises two fingers.

Hakuryu: ??????????

Sinja: "My final opportunity."

Hakuryu lowers one finger.

Then the other.

His hand closes.

Hakuryu: ??????????

Sinja swallows.

He knows these words.

He's heard them before.

Sinja: "There will be no strike three."

Hakuryu moves closer.

Hakuryu: ??????????????????????

Sinja: "If I fail, I will no longer be his disciple."

Hakuryu takes one final step.

Almost face-to-face.

Hakuryu: ????????????????

Sinja's eyes remain locked on his master's.

Sinja: "I become his problem."

Hakuryu says nothing else.

He doesn't need to.

Sinja knows the rest.

Hakuryu turns toward the door.

He takes several steps.

Then stops.

Without looking back...

Hakuryu: ?????

Sinja straightens.

Sinja: "Yes, Master."

Hakuryu exits.

Sinja remains behind for only a moment.

His usual smugness is nowhere to be found.

He looks toward the doorway.

Then lowers his head.

Sinja: "No strike three."

Sinja follows his master.

Hakuryu vs Yoshii

Match

The United States Championship graphic fills the screen.

The image of Yoshii appears on one side.

Hakuryu on the other.

Between them, the championship neither man has been willing to stop fighting over.

John Phillips: "One Last Stop. Toronto. July twenty-fifth. Hakuryu took the United States Championship from Yoshii."

Mark Bravo: "And Yoshii didn't make excuses. He didn't say it shouldn't count. He didn't say Hakuryu got lucky. He looked the man who beat him in the eye and asked for another fight."

John Phillips: "And when this match was made, Yoshii was very specific. No Sinja. No Jed Dye. No problems. His words: only fight."

Mark Bravo: "That was the idea."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Then everybody actually showed up."

The graphic disappears.

? WOLF TOTEM ?

The opening blast of "Wolf Totem" by The HU featuring Jacoby Shaddix sends the Crypto.com Arena crowd to its feet.

Yoshii emerges through the curtain.

And immediately, the enormous former United States Champion is smiling.

Not because this match doesn't matter.

Because this is Yoshii.

He reaches toward the barricade as he starts down the aisle, enormous hands meeting dozens of smaller ones. A child near the front reaches desperately over the railing and Yoshii changes direction just to make sure he gets the high-five.

Behind him...

Jed Dye marches.

Perfectly pressed tan suit.

Rigid posture.

Every movement carrying the seriousness of a man escorting classified government material rather than a six-foot-four, five-hundred-eighty-three-pound former sumo champion toward a wrestling ring.

John Phillips: "Five hundred and eighty-three pounds. Former world champion professional sumo wrestler. Former UTA World Champion. Former United States Champion. Yoshii has never needed anybody to make him dangerous."

Mark Bravo: "Try explaining that to Jed Dye."

Jed points toward the ring.

Then toward his wrist despite not actually wearing a watch.

Apparently Yoshii's interaction with the children is interfering with some imaginary timetable.

Yoshii ignores him.

Another high-five.

Another grin.

Then he reaches ringside.

And the smile disappears.

Just like that.

Yoshii looks into the ring.

His eyes settle on the empty corner where Hakuryu will soon stand.

The competitor takes over.

John Phillips: "That's the change."

Mark Bravo: "Yep."

John Phillips: "The people love Yoshii because he's fun. Because he's approachable. Because there is genuine joy in what he does."

Mark Bravo: "And then somebody hits him."

Yoshii climbs the steel steps.

Mark Bravo: "That's usually when the fun part ends."

Yoshii steps over the top rope.

Jed climbs onto the apron behind him, then ducks between the ropes and immediately begins directing traffic nobody asked him to direct.

Yoshii walks to the center of the ring.

He turns toward the crowd.

One enormous arm rises.

Yoshii: "YOSHII!!!"

The crowd answers him.

Crowd: "YOSHII!!!"

He pounds his chest once.

Then points toward the entrance.

No more smiling.

He's ready.

Jed steps beside him and begins saying something.

Yoshii raises one massive hand.

Jed stops.

Yoshii looks down at him.

Yoshii: "Only fight."

Jed blinks.

Then smiles reassuringly.

Jed Dye: "Precisely. Competitive purity. Exactly as administratively intended."

Yoshii continues staring at him.

Jed adjusts his jacket.

Jed Dye: "I shall merely observe."

Yoshii nods.

Jed smiles.

Yoshii turns away.

The smile immediately leaves Jed's face.

Mark Bravo: "I don't trust that man."

John Phillips: "You don't trust anybody."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but I'm really good at it."

Yoshii settles into his corner.

Jed exits the ring.

The music fades.

For several seconds, nothing replaces it.

Then—

GOOOOOONG.

The arena goes black.

A second gong.

A white spotlight appears near the entrance.

Smoke begins to roll across the stage.

A figure steps into the light.

Sinja.

White suit.

White face paint.

Motionless.

The spiritual chants begin.

And through the smoke comes The White Dragon.

Hakuryu.

Full pilgrimage garments.

White robes.

Takuhatsugasa concealing his face.

Shakujo staff in one hand.

Kongo-zue in the other.

The United States Championship secured around his waist.

Yoshii doesn't move inside the ring.

Neither does Jed.

But Jed's eyes immediately move to Sinja.

Sinja notices.

For a fraction of a second, something changes behind the paint.

Then Sinja looks away.

John Phillips: "There is another match happening around this championship tonight, whether anybody wants to admit it or not."

Mark Bravo: "Sinja was ordered to do nothing last week. Jed Dye could've danced the Macarena six inches from his face and Sinja wasn't allowed to touch him."

John Phillips: "And he obeyed."

Mark Bravo: "Which was apparently only enough to earn him the right to take whatever test Hakuryu has waiting tonight."

Hakuryu begins his walk.

Slow.

Measured.

No acknowledgement of Los Angeles.

No acknowledgement of Jed Dye.

Not even Yoshii.

Yet.

Every step is deliberate.

Sinja follows.

As they reach ringside, Hakuryu stops.

He slowly raises his head.

The brim of the hat lifts enough for his eyes to become visible.

They find Yoshii.

Yoshii takes one step out of his corner.

The crowd rises.

No gesture.

No trash talk.

Just recognition.

They have done this before.

And neither man believes the first answer was enough.

Hakuryu brings his hands together.

His head lowers.

A prayer escapes beneath his breath.

Sinja steps onto the apron and pulls the middle and top ropes apart.

Hakuryu ascends the steps.

He enters.

Sinja follows only long enough to receive the ceremonial garments.

The takuhatsugasa comes off.

Then the robes.

The scripture across Hakuryu's body becomes visible beneath the lights.

Finally, Hakuryu removes the United States Championship.

He looks at it.

Then at Yoshii.

Hakuryu walks to the center of the ring.

Yoshii meets him there.

The difference is staggering.

Five hundred eighty-three pounds looking down at two hundred forty.

Hakuryu doesn't retreat an inch.

He raises the United States Championship between them.

Yoshii looks at it.

Then at Hakuryu.

Yoshii: "Yoshii take back."

Hakuryu answers quietly.

Hakuryu: "???????"

Sinja stands on the apron.

Sinja: "If you can."

Yoshii nods.

No anger.

No insult taken.

That is exactly the answer he wanted.

Hakuryu hands the championship to the referee.

The referee raises it high.

John Phillips: "That's what this is supposed to be."

The United States Championship catches the light.

John Phillips: "Two men. One championship. Find out who is better."

The referee hands the title outside.

Sinja steps down from the apron.

Across the ring, Jed Dye takes his position.

Yoshii points at him.

Two fingers point from Jed...

...to Sinja.

Then Yoshii points toward the floor.

Yoshii: "Stay."

Jed places a hand over his heart.

Jed Dye: "You have my word."

Yoshii turns toward Sinja.

He gives him the same look.

Sinja doesn't answer.

Hakuryu does.

A few quiet words in Japanese.

Sinja's eyes shift toward his master.

Then he lowers his head.

And takes one deliberate step backward from the apron.

Yoshii nods.

Good enough.

Mark Bravo: "Okay. Everybody's agreed to behave."

John Phillips: "Do you believe them?"

Mark Bravo: "I believe Yoshii."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Next question."

The referee checks both men.

Yoshii settles low.

Hakuryu does not.

The White Dragon stands almost unnaturally still.

Hands relaxed.

Breathing controlled.

Watching.

Studying.

DING! DING! DING!

Yoshii advances immediately.

Hakuryu retreats.

Not quickly.

Not fearfully.

One step.

Then another.

Yoshii follows.

Hakuryu circles.

Yoshii turns with him.

Hakuryu's eyes move from Yoshii's shoulders...

...to his hips...

...to his feet.

John Phillips: "And already you can see the problem Hakuryu has to solve."

Mark Bravo: "Five hundred eighty-three pounds of it."

Yoshii raises both hands.

He invites the lockup.

The crowd responds.

Hakuryu looks at the hands.

Then Yoshii.

He brings his palms together.

A short prayer.

Yoshii waits.

Hakuryu finishes.

Then steps forward.

They lock up.

For approximately one second.

Yoshii launches Hakuryu backward.

The White Dragon travels halfway across the ring before catching himself.

The crowd roars.

Yoshii smiles.

Not mocking.

Enjoying himself.

Hakuryu straightens.

His expression remains unchanged.

He brings his hands together again.

Mark Bravo: "I don't know what prayer covers being thrown twelve feet, but Hakuryu apparently does."

Yoshii beckons him forward.

Hakuryu approaches again.

Yoshii reaches for another lockup—

Hakuryu disappears beneath the arms.

One sharp kick lands against the outside of Yoshii's left knee.

Hakuryu immediately retreats.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu waits.

Yoshii advances.

Another low kick.

This one to the opposite leg.

Retreat.

Reset.

Prayer.

John Phillips: "There it is. Hakuryu isn't going to wrestle Yoshii's match."

Mark Bravo: "He'd be an idiot if he did. You don't prove you're stronger than a former sumo champion who weighs almost six hundred pounds. You make six hundred pounds harder to move."

Yoshii advances again.

Hakuryu kicks the leg.

Yoshii keeps coming.

Another kick.

Yoshii keeps coming.

Hakuryu throws a third—

Yoshii catches the leg.

The arena erupts.

Hakuryu's eyes widen just slightly.

Yoshii grins.

Yoshii: "Yoshii."

He yanks Hakuryu toward him.

THWACK!

A massive sumo chop caves into Hakuryu's chest.

Hakuryu stumbles backward.

Yoshii follows.

Another chop.

THWACK!

Hakuryu's back hits the turnbuckles.

Yoshii steps in.

A third sumo chop.

Hakuryu's chest immediately begins reddening.

The champion tries to slide sideways.

Yoshii catches him.

And throws Hakuryu across the ring with a side belly-to-belly suplex.

Hakuryu hits hard.

Yoshii sits up.

The crowd roars.

Outside, Jed Dye applauds wildly.

Jed Dye: "Precisely! Optimal mass utilization!"

Yoshii glances at him.

Jed immediately stops talking.

Mark Bravo: "I think Yoshii just told Jed to shut up without actually telling Jed to shut up."

Hakuryu rolls toward the ropes.

Yoshii rises.

Hakuryu gets one knee underneath him.

Yoshii approaches.

Hakuryu looks up.

Waits.

Waits...

Yoshii reaches—

Hakuryu explodes upward with a superkick to the knee.

Yoshii buckles.

Hakuryu spins.

Tornado kick catches Yoshii high across the side of the head.

Yoshii staggers.

But does not fall.

Hakuryu lands.

Looks at him.

For the first time, the champion has confirmation.

The legs can be damaged.

The head can be reached.

But Yoshii is still standing.

Hakuryu brings his hands together.

Prayer.

Yoshii shakes his head clear.

The smile is gone.

John Phillips: "And there it is."

Mark Bravo: "Fun Yoshii just left the building."

Yoshii charges.

Hakuryu moves.

Five hundred eighty-three pounds crashes chest-first into the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu turns.

Measures.

Hands together.

Then a handspring—

BACK ELBOW!

It lands flush.

Yoshii rocks against the corner.

Hakuryu lands on his feet.

He doesn't rush.

He looks down.

At Yoshii's left knee.

Then he attacks it again.

A sharp kick.

Another.

Yoshii reaches for him.

Hakuryu slips away.

Outside, Sinja watches every movement.

Still.

Controlled.

Across the ring, Jed Dye watches too.

But Jed isn't watching Hakuryu.

He's watching Sinja.

Sinja notices.

The two managers lock eyes.

Jed smiles.

Sinja does not.

Inside the ring, Yoshii finally catches Hakuryu with both hands.

Hakuryu tries to twist free.

Too late.

Yoshii lifts him.

SAMOAN DROP!

The ring shakes.

Yoshii hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Hakuryu kicks out.

Yoshii sits upright.

Breathing heavier now.

His left leg extends for a moment before he pulls it underneath himself.

Hakuryu sees it.

Even from the mat.

He sees everything.

John Phillips: "Yoshii got the first serious near fall, but look at Hakuryu."

Hakuryu rolls onto one knee.

Eyes on the leg.

John Phillips: "He's learning."

Mark Bravo: "That's what makes him terrifying. You hurt Hakuryu, he doesn't get mad."

Hakuryu slowly rises.

His palms come together.

Mark Bravo: "He takes notes."

Yoshii gets back to his feet.

Hakuryu immediately attacks the left leg.

A low kick lands above the knee.

Yoshii grimaces.

Another.

Yoshii reaches for him.

Hakuryu slips sideways.

Another kick.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is giving up nearly three hundred and fifty pounds in this match. He's not going to make that difference disappear, but he can change what Yoshii is able to do with it."

Mark Bravo: "Take away the legs, you take away the charge. Take away the charge, suddenly five hundred eighty-three pounds becomes five hundred eighty-three pounds that has to stand still."

Hakuryu throws another kick.

Yoshii absorbs it.

Another.

This time Yoshii's leg visibly gives.

Hakuryu sees it.

He attacks again—

Yoshii catches him with a massive open-hand chop across the chest!

THWACK!

Hakuryu drops immediately.

Mark Bravo: "And that's the counterargument."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu can have the perfect strategy, but every time Yoshii gets his hands on him, that strategy is in danger of being erased."

Yoshii looks down at his left leg.

He bends the knee once.

Tests it.

Then reaches down and pulls Hakuryu upright.

Hakuryu suddenly kicks the knee again.

Yoshii buckles.

Hakuryu grabs the head.

DDT!

Yoshii's skull hits the canvas.

Hakuryu rolls him.

Cover.

ONE!

Yoshii launches Hakuryu off before two.

Hakuryu lands several feet away.

John Phillips: "Not even a two count."

Mark Bravo: "But I don't think Hakuryu expected one."

John Phillips: "You think that cover was another test?"

Mark Bravo: "Everything Hakuryu does is a test. How fast did Yoshii kick out? Which leg did he plant to do it? How quickly did he sit up? This guy doesn't waste information."

Hakuryu is already watching.

Yoshii sits up.

Left hand on the mat.

Right foot planted.

Left leg extended.

Hakuryu's eyes settle on it.

Bravo was right.

Yoshii gets up.

Hakuryu comes forward.

Yoshii swings.

Hakuryu ducks.

Kick to the knee.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

He comes back with a running strike—

Yoshii catches him!

John Phillips: "Caught!"

Hakuryu is lifted off his feet.

Yoshii turns.

BELLY-TO-BELLY!

Hakuryu is thrown across the ring.

He lands hard and rolls underneath the bottom rope.

Mark Bravo: "That's what I mean. Hakuryu spends three minutes solving a problem, and Yoshii picks him up and throws him into another zip code."

John Phillips: "And that may have been the smartest thing Hakuryu could've done—keep rolling. Get outside. Give yourself a moment."

Hakuryu lands on the floor.

Sinja immediately moves toward him.

Then stops.

Hakuryu looks up.

Sinja waits.

Hakuryu gives no instruction.

So Sinja does nothing.

John Phillips: "Watch Sinja."

Mark Bravo: "He wants to help."

John Phillips: "But he isn't."

Mark Bravo: "That's growth for Sinja."

Across the ring, Jed Dye begins shouting.

Jed Dye: "Press the advantage! He has voluntarily exited the designated competition area!"

Yoshii looks over his shoulder.

Yoshii: "Jed."

Jed points toward Hakuryu.

Jed Dye: "I'm merely observing."

Yoshii stares at him.

Jed Dye: "Quietly."

Jed lowers his voice.

Mark Bravo: "How did Yoshii survive before Jed?"

John Phillips: "Very successfully."

Mark Bravo: "That's what I thought."

Hakuryu pulls himself onto the apron.

Yoshii waits.

No cheap shot.

No attempt to knock him back down.

Hakuryu notices.

He steps through the ropes.

Yoshii gives him room.

John Phillips: "That's important. Yoshii could've attacked while Hakuryu was entering."

Mark Bravo: "But that's not the match Yoshii asked for. He said it himself: only fight."

The two men circle again.

Hakuryu keeps moving.

Yoshii's movement is noticeably slower now.

Hakuryu feints toward the leg.

Yoshii reacts.

Hakuryu immediately goes high.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii staggers backward.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

Running dropkick to the knee!

Yoshii drops onto one knee.

The crowd rises.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has him down!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the first major victory of the strategy. Yoshii is finally at Hakuryu's level."

Hakuryu backs into the corner.

He brings his hands together.

Yoshii tries to stand.

Hakuryu charges.

SHINING WIZARD!

The strike catches Yoshii across the side of the head.

Yoshii falls.

Hakuryu immediately hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Yoshii powers out!

John Phillips: "Two! This time Hakuryu gets two!"

Mark Bravo: "And now we have progression. First cover, Yoshii threw him off before two. This time Hakuryu kept him down for two. The White Dragon is getting closer."

Hakuryu remains kneeling beside Yoshii.

No frustration.

No complaint.

Just another piece of information.

Hakuryu grabs the left ankle.

Yoshii immediately realizes what's happening.

He kicks with the right leg.

Hakuryu avoids it.

He twists the damaged leg.

Yoshii roars.

Hakuryu drops his weight across the knee.

John Phillips: "Now Hakuryu is trying to turn all that damage into a submission!"

Yoshii reaches toward the ropes.

Too far.

Hakuryu adjusts.

More pressure.

Yoshii pounds the mat once.

Not a submission.

Anger.

Mark Bravo: "And here's where five hundred eighty-three pounds works against Yoshii. Moving that body toward the ropes with one functioning leg is a completely different problem."

Yoshii digs his forearms into the mat.

He pulls.

Hakuryu holds on.

Yoshii pulls again.

Several inches.

Hakuryu shifts his weight.

Yoshii stops moving.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has stopped him!"

Outside, Jed Dye becomes animated.

Jed Dye: "Rope! Your right side! Forty degrees!"

Yoshii looks toward the ropes.

Then begins dragging himself again.

Mark Bravo: "Okay, that one I'll give Jed. That's useful."

John Phillips: "That's what a manager is supposed to do."

Mark Bravo: "Which is why I'm suspicious."

Yoshii reaches.

Still short.

Hakuryu cranks harder.

Yoshii's face tightens.

Sinja watches from the opposite side.

His eyes never leave his master.

Yoshii reaches again.

Fingertips brush the bottom rope.

Not enough.

One more pull.

Yoshii grabs it.

The referee calls for the break.

Hakuryu releases immediately.

He rises.

Steps backward.

And brings his hands together.

John Phillips: "Immediate break from Hakuryu."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't need five. He got what he wanted."

Yoshii pulls himself upright with the ropes.

Hakuryu waits in the center.

Yoshii puts weight on the left leg.

It nearly gives.

The crowd reacts.

John Phillips: "That leg is becoming a serious problem."

Mark Bravo: "And we're not talking about some cosmetic injury you forget about thirty seconds later. Yoshii can't hide it. Hakuryu has spent this entire match making sure of that."

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu motions him forward.

Yoshii comes.

Slowly.

Hakuryu attacks the leg.

Yoshii absorbs it.

Another kick.

Yoshii absorbs that too.

Hakuryu throws a third—

Yoshii catches it!

Hakuryu tries to pull free.

Yoshii won't let go.

Hakuryu jumps and throws an enziguri—

Yoshii ducks!

Hakuryu hits the mat.

Yoshii falls on him.

Not gracefully.

Not technically.

Five hundred eighty-three pounds simply crashes across Hakuryu's torso.

Mark Bravo: "OH!"

John Phillips: "Hakuryu just disappeared!"

Yoshii hooks a leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

Hakuryu gets a shoulder up!

John Phillips: "Two and a half!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the other thing Hakuryu can't strategize away. Yoshii doesn't need perfect technique every second. Sometimes gravity is the move."

Yoshii pushes himself up.

The left leg slows him.

Hakuryu crawls toward the corner.

Yoshii follows.

Hakuryu reaches the turnbuckles.

Yoshii closes in.

Hakuryu throws a kick.

Yoshii blocks it.

He drives his entire body into Hakuryu.

Hakuryu is crushed against the corner.

Yoshii backs away.

Charges—

AVALANCHE!

Hakuryu's body snaps backward against the turnbuckles.

John Phillips: "That'll take the air out of you!"

Yoshii backs up again.

The damaged leg nearly betrays him.

He steadies himself.

Then charges again.

Hakuryu moves!

Yoshii catches the corner.

Hakuryu slips behind him.

Kick to the knee!

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

Running knee to the back of the head!

Yoshii slumps against the middle rope.

John Phillips: "Again! Hakuryu immediately goes back to the weakness!"

Hakuryu grabs Yoshii's left leg and drags it toward the ropes.

He places the ankle across the bottom rope.

Hakuryu steps onto the middle rope.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, no."

Hakuryu rises.

Yoshii realizes the danger.

Hakuryu jumps—

Yoshii yanks the leg away!

Hakuryu lands on his feet.

Yoshii rolls toward the center.

Hakuryu follows.

Outside the ring, Jed Dye reaches through the ropes.

His hand closes around Hakuryu's ankle.

Just for a moment.

Hakuryu stumbles.

John Phillips: "HEY!"

Mark Bravo: "There it is!"

Sinja sees it.

His entire body reacts.

One step toward Jed.

His fists clench.

John Phillips: "Jed Dye grabbed Hakuryu!"

Mark Bravo: "And Sinja saw it!"

Sinja starts around the ring.

Hakuryu turns his head.

He sees his disciple moving.

Hakuryu raises one hand.

Sinja stops.

Immediately.

His jaw tightens.

But he stops.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu just stopped Sinja from retaliating!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the test. That's got to be part of it. Jed just broke the agreement, Sinja saw it, and Hakuryu still told him no."

Jed quickly pulls his hand away.

He straightens his jacket.

Innocence personified.

Except—

Yoshii saw him.

The former champion slowly turns his head.

Jed's expression changes.

Yoshii: "Jed."

Nothing about Yoshii's voice is friendly.

Jed raises both hands.

Jed Dye: "There appeared to be a potential balance irregularity and I instinctively—"

Yoshii: "No."

Jed stops.

Yoshii steps through the ropes onto the apron.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has stopped his own championship match!"

Mark Bravo: "Good."

Yoshii drops to the floor.

He walks directly toward Jed.

Jed takes one step backward.

Jed Dye: "Yoshii, strategically speaking, there is no benefit to voluntarily abandoning—"

Yoshii points toward the ring.

Yoshii: "Yoshii fight."

Then he points at Jed.

Yoshii: "Jed watch."

Jed nods.

Yoshii: "No help."

Jed opens his mouth.

Yoshii raises one finger.

Jed closes it.

Yoshii: "Yoshii win."

He points toward himself.

Then toward Hakuryu.

Yoshii: "Or Hakuryu win."

A beat.

Yoshii: "Not Jed."

The crowd applauds.

John Phillips: "There is no ambiguity there."

Mark Bravo: "None. Yoshii would rather lose this championship match than win because Jed Dye stole it for him."

Yoshii leans closer.

Yoshii: "Understand?"

Jed looks up at his client.

For once, no statistical explanation.

No legalese.

Jed Dye: "Yes."

Yoshii stares at him another moment.

Then turns back toward the ring.

Across ringside, Sinja is staring at Jed.

The anger is obvious.

But he hasn't moved.

Hakuryu looks at his disciple.

Sinja looks back.

Hakuryu gives the smallest nod.

Sinja lowers his head.

John Phillips: "Did you see that?"

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu noticed."

John Phillips: "Sinja had every reason to go after Jed Dye. Weeks ago, he probably would've done exactly that."

Mark Bravo: "Tonight he stopped because his master told him to stop. And Hakuryu just acknowledged it."

Yoshii climbs back onto the apron.

He steps through the ropes.

Hakuryu has remained in the ring the entire time.

Waiting.

Yoshii approaches him.

For a moment, the two men simply look at one another.

Yoshii points toward Jed.

Then shakes his head.

Yoshii: "Sorry."

Hakuryu studies him.

Then bows his head slightly.

Accepted.

Mark Bravo: "I like this."

John Phillips: "Two men who don't particularly like one another."

Mark Bravo: "Don't need to. They respect the fight."

Yoshii backs away.

Hakuryu does the same.

The referee checks both men.

Then motions.

Continue.

Yoshii raises his hands.

Hakuryu brings his palms together.

The crowd begins to rise again.

John Phillips: "All right. Jed Dye has been warned by his own client. Sinja has obeyed his master."

Yoshii takes one step forward.

Hakuryu lowers his hands.

John Phillips: "Now let's find out who wins this championship match."

Mark Bravo: "Only fight."

They collide again in the center of the ring.

Yoshii gets both hands onto Hakuryu.

Hakuryu immediately twists away.

A kick slams into the damaged left leg.

Yoshii fires a sumo chop.

Hakuryu ducks.

Another kick to the thigh.

Hakuryu pivots away before Yoshii can grab him.

John Phillips: "And right back to the leg. Hakuryu isn't changing the plan simply because Jed Dye interrupted it."

Mark Bravo: "Why would he? It's working. Yoshii can barely plant on that side anymore."

Hakuryu comes forward again.

Kick.

Yoshii absorbs it.

Kick.

Yoshii's knee bends.

Hakuryu throws another—

Yoshii steps INTO it.

He takes the kick and wraps both arms around Hakuryu.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu's caught!"

Yoshii lifts.

Hakuryu fires elbows down across the side of Yoshii's head.

One.

Two.

Three.

Yoshii loses his grip.

Hakuryu lands behind him.

Another kick to the knee!

Yoshii drops onto one leg.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

He charges—

Yoshii surges upright!

SUMO CHOP!

THWACK!

Hakuryu flips backward from the impact.

The crowd erupts.

Mark Bravo: "GOOD LORD!"

John Phillips: "Hakuryu was building momentum and Yoshii just stopped him with one hand!"

Hakuryu rolls onto his stomach.

Yoshii is hurting.

He knows it.

So instead of pursuing quickly, he reaches down and grabs Hakuryu by the ankle.

Hakuryu tries to kick free.

Yoshii drags him backward.

Hakuryu claws at the canvas.

Yoshii drags him all the way into the center.

Then drops his enormous body across Hakuryu's back.

Hakuryu disappears beneath him.

Mark Bravo: "Strategy!"

John Phillips: "That's your analysis?"

Mark Bravo: "Yes! Lay on him! You weigh five hundred eighty-three pounds! That's an excellent strategy!"

Yoshii shifts his weight.

Hakuryu tries to crawl.

He cannot.

Yoshii reaches underneath.

He pulls Hakuryu upward.

Hakuryu fires a back elbow.

Yoshii takes it.

Another.

Yoshii takes that too.

Hakuryu gets one knee underneath himself.

Yoshii clubs him across the upper back.

Hakuryu collapses.

John Phillips: "This is the other side of the match now. Hakuryu has damaged Yoshii enough that Yoshii can't chase him anymore."

Mark Bravo: "So Yoshii stopped chasing."

John Phillips: "Exactly. If he gets hold of Hakuryu, he's keeping him there."

Yoshii pulls Hakuryu upright.

Hakuryu suddenly hooks Yoshii's arm.

He twists.

Yoshii's size prevents the takedown.

Hakuryu changes direction.

Kick to the leg!

Yoshii buckles.

Hakuryu hooks the head.

He tries to pull Yoshii down.

Yoshii resists.

Hakuryu tries again.

Nothing.

Mark Bravo: "You can have all the technique in the world, but at some point physics files an objection."

Yoshii lifts Hakuryu straight off the mat.

Hakuryu's legs kick.

Yoshii turns—

Hakuryu slips free!
He lands behind Yoshii.
Yoshii turns slowly.
Hakuryu jumps.
PELE KICK!
It catches Yoshii across the head.
Yoshii staggers.
Hakuryu rolls through.
Gets up.
SUPERKICK!
Yoshii staggers again.
Still standing.
John Phillips: "Two clean shots and Yoshii is still on his feet!"
Hakuryu backs toward the ropes.
His hands come together.
A brief prayer.
Then he explodes forward.
RUNNING KNEE!
Yoshii falls!
The crowd rises.
John Phillips: "DOWN! Yoshii is down!"
Hakuryu dives onto him.
He hooks the massive leg as tightly as he can.
ONE!
TWO!
THR—
YOSHII KICKS OUT!
Hakuryu is thrown sideways by the force.
John Phillips: "Two and nine-tenths!"
Mark Bravo: "And look at Hakuryu."
Hakuryu sits on the mat.
For the first time tonight...
There is frustration.

Not much.

A tightening of the jaw.

A slightly harder breath.

But it's there.

Mark Bravo: "He's not panicking. But that's the first time I've seen the White Dragon look like the answer surprised him."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has dismantled Yoshii's leg, hit him in the head repeatedly, and finally put all five hundred eighty-three pounds flat on the canvas. It still wasn't enough."

Hakuryu looks toward Sinja.

Sinja remains exactly where he was told to remain.

Their eyes meet.

No words.

Hakuryu looks back toward Yoshii.

Across ringside, Jed Dye watches closely.

His face betrays nothing.

But his eyes are moving.

Ring.

Referee.

Sinja.

Hakuryu.

Back to Yoshii.

John Phillips: "Jed Dye has been remarkably quiet since Yoshii confronted him."

Mark Bravo: "That's making me more nervous."

John Phillips: "Maybe he listened."

Mark Bravo: "John, I've met Jed."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Quiet Jed is planning Jed."

Hakuryu rises.

Yoshii begins doing the same.

The damaged left leg refuses to cooperate.

Yoshii grabs the middle rope.

Pulls.

Hakuryu sees it.

He charges.

Yoshii turns—

Hakuryu leaps!

Yoshii catches him!

John Phillips: "NO!"

Hakuryu is trapped against Yoshii's chest.

Yoshii adjusts his grip.

Then launches him with an overhead belly-to-belly suplex!

Hakuryu crashes near the opposite corner.

Yoshii falls immediately afterward.

His left knee gives out beneath him.

Both men are down.

The audience applauds.

John Phillips: "And there is the entire match in one exchange! Yoshii has the power to change everything the moment he catches Hakuryu, but every time he uses that power, that damaged leg has to support nearly six hundred pounds!"

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu may not have stopped Yoshii's offense. He's put a price tag on it."

The referee checks both men.

Yoshii waves the official away.

Hakuryu rolls toward the ropes.

Sinja watches.

Jed watches.

The crowd begins clapping rhythmically.

Yoshii gets up first.

Barely.

Hakuryu reaches his feet in the corner.

Yoshii looks across the ring.

Hakuryu looks back.

Yoshii slaps his own chest.

Yoshii: "HAKURYU!"

The champion straightens.

Yoshii beckons him forward.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is asking him to fight."

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu's been fighting him for fifteen minutes."

John Phillips: "No. Yoshii wants him to stop moving."

Hakuryu understands.

He looks down at Yoshii's damaged leg.

Then back into Yoshii's eyes.

His hands come together.

Yoshii waits.

Hakuryu finishes the prayer.

Then steps away from the corner.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, this is a terrible idea."

Hakuryu walks directly toward Yoshii.

Yoshii raises his right hand.

Hakuryu does not evade.

THWACK!

Sumo chop across the chest.

Hakuryu rocks backward.

He stays standing.

Yoshii gestures.

Your turn.

Hakuryu fires a kick across Yoshii's chest.

Yoshii absorbs it.

He nods.

John Phillips: "They're trading now."

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu spent the entire match avoiding exactly this."

Yoshii chops him again.

THWACK!

Hakuryu answers with another kick.

Yoshii chops.

Hakuryu kicks.

Chop.

Kick.

Chop.

Kick.

The crowd gets louder with every exchange.

John Phillips: "Neither man backing down!"

Yoshii winds up—

THWACK!

Hakuryu nearly falls.

He catches himself.

Yoshii roars.

The crowd roars with him.

Hakuryu steadies.

Hands together.

Prayer.

Then—

ROUNDHOUSE KICK!

Yoshii's head snaps sideways.

He wobbles.

Hakuryu throws another!

Yoshii catches it!

John Phillips: "Caught again!"

Yoshii pulls Hakuryu inward.

HEADBUTT!

Hakuryu collapses.

Yoshii falls to his knees beside him.

Mark Bravo: "Okay. Yoshii wins the bad-idea contest."

Yoshii rolls Hakuryu over.

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

HAKURYU KICKS OUT!

The arena erupts again.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu survives!"

Mark Bravo: "And now Yoshii got his answer too."

Yoshii sits beside Hakuryu.

He looks toward the referee.

Two.

Yoshii nods.

No argument.

He reaches down.

Pulls Hakuryu upright.

Hakuryu can barely stand.

Yoshii hooks him.

John Phillips: "Yoshii may be looking to end this!"

Hakuryu suddenly drops his weight.

Yoshii tries to lift.

The damaged leg gives.

Yoshii drops Hakuryu.

Hakuryu immediately kicks the knee.

Yoshii falls against the ropes.

Hakuryu attacks again.

Another kick.

Another.

Another.

John Phillips: "No hesitation now! Hakuryu saw the leg fail and he is tearing into it!"

Mark Bravo: "Respect doesn't mean stupidity. Yoshii asked him to stand and fight, Hakuryu gave him his moment. Now we're back to business."

Hakuryu grabs the leg.

Yoshii clings to the top rope.

Hakuryu twists.

Yoshii roars.

The referee moves closer.

Yoshii refuses to release the rope.

Hakuryu finally lets the leg go.

Yoshii stumbles along the ropes toward the corner.

Hakuryu follows.

Jed Dye begins moving around ringside.

Slowly.

Casually.

Trying very hard to look like he isn't moving anywhere in particular.

Sinja notices immediately.

Mark Bravo: "There he goes."

John Phillips: "Jed hasn't done anything."

Mark Bravo: "Yet."

Jed reaches the side of the ring nearest Sinja.

Sinja turns toward him.

Jed stops.

They stare at each other.

Jed smiles.

Sinja's fists tighten.

Inside the ring, Hakuryu backs away from Yoshii.

He measures the challenger.

Yoshii pulls himself upright in the corner.

Hakuryu charges.

Yoshii moves!

Hakuryu hits the turnbuckles.

Yoshii grabs him from behind.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Hakuryu lands high on his shoulders.

Yoshii doesn't cover.

He can't.

The damaged leg gives out again.

Yoshii drops beside him.

John Phillips: "Yoshii had the opening, but the leg won't let him capitalize!"

Mark Bravo: "That's fifteen minutes of work paying dividends for Hakuryu."

Both men are down.

Jed looks into the ring.

Then at Sinja.

Then back toward the referee.

The referee is checking Yoshii.

Jed takes one step toward the apron.

Sinja immediately takes one step toward Jed.

Jed stops.

Sinja stops.

John Phillips: "Look at this."

Mark Bravo: "That's a chess match I don't trust either one of them to play."

Jed smiles again.

He raises both hands.

Nothing happening here.

Sinja remains focused on him.

And that is exactly what Jed wanted.

Because inside the ring, Yoshii is beginning to stand.

Hakuryu is beginning to stand.

And neither man has any idea what is happening outside.

John Phillips: "Jed Dye has already been warned once tonight. Yoshii made it crystal clear that he wants no help."

Mark Bravo: "Which means if Jed has half a brain, he'll stay right where he is."

Jed's smile widens slightly.

Mark Bravo: "...I don't like that smile."

Hakuryu reaches his feet.

Yoshii reaches his.

They turn toward each other.

And the fight continues.

Hakuryu strikes first.

A kick into Yoshii's left thigh.

Another.

Yoshii answers with a chop.

THWACK!

Hakuryu stumbles backward.

Yoshii follows.

Hakuryu fires another kick.

Yoshii's knee bends.

Hakuryu spins—

TORNADO KICK!

Yoshii reels into the ropes.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has him hurt again!"

Mark Bravo: "But every time he gets Yoshii hurt, he's still got to figure out how to finish five hundred eighty-three pounds."

Hakuryu charges.

Yoshii ducks down.

BACK BODY DROP!

Hakuryu sails over the top rope—

And somehow catches it!

Hakuryu hangs onto the top rope and lands on the apron.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu saved himself!"

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu springs upward.

Kick through the ropes!

Yoshii staggers backward.

Hakuryu grabs the top rope.

He looks toward the turnbuckle.

Then brings his hands together.

Mark Bravo: "He's going up."

Hakuryu climbs.

Yoshii turns back toward him.

Hakuryu reaches the top.

He settles into the praying position.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu looking for Breath of the Dragon!"

Hakuryu launches himself from the top rope—

YOSHII MOVES!

Hakuryu realizes it in midair.

He twists just enough to avoid driving his head directly into the canvas, but he still crashes hard across his shoulder and chest.

John Phillips: "Nobody home!"

Mark Bravo: "That might be the opening Yoshii has spent this whole match looking for!"

Hakuryu rolls onto his back.

Yoshii is already coming.

Slowly.

Bad leg dragging.

But coming.

Hakuryu tries to rise.

Yoshii grabs him.

He hauls Hakuryu up against his chest.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu's trapped!"

Yoshii squeezes.

Hakuryu's feet leave the canvas.

The air is crushed from his body.

Mark Bravo: "That's not a hold you escape by being clever, John. That's a building collapsing around you."

Hakuryu fires an elbow.

Yoshii squeezes harder.

Another elbow.

Yoshii's grip loosens slightly.

Hakuryu drives both palms against Yoshii's ears.

Yoshii releases him.

Hakuryu lands.

Kick to the knee!

Yoshii drops to one knee.

Hakuryu immediately grabs him.

He tries to pull Yoshii upward.

Nothing.

Hakuryu resets his grip.

Tries again.

Yoshii doesn't move.

Mark Bravo: "Don't."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu may be trying to set up the Nenbutsu Bomb!"

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu weighs two-forty. Yoshii weighs five-eighty-three. I repeat: don't."

Hakuryu brings his hands together briefly.

Then tries again.

Yoshii rises—

But not because Hakuryu lifted him.

Yoshii stands under his own power.

Hakuryu suddenly realizes the mistake.

Yoshii wraps both arms around him.

OVERHEAD BELLY-TO-BELLY!

Hakuryu crashes across the ring.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu tried to do something extraordinary and Yoshii made him pay for it!"

Mark Bravo: "Patience has been Hakuryu's greatest weapon all night. That was the first time he tried to force something that wasn't there."

Yoshii pushes himself up.

Hakuryu crawls toward the corner.

Yoshii follows.

The crowd rises with him.

Hakuryu pulls himself upright.

Yoshii backs away.

Several steps.

His left leg almost gives.

He catches himself.

John Phillips: "Yoshii wants the avalanche again!"

Yoshii charges.

Hakuryu moves—

NO!

Yoshii adjusts!

He catches Hakuryu trying to escape and crushes him against the turnbuckles!

Mark Bravo: "He read him!"

Hakuryu slumps.

Yoshii backs up.

Charges again.

SECOND AVALANCHE!

Hakuryu nearly collapses.

Yoshii grabs him before he can.

He pulls the champion away from the corner.

Hakuryu throws a desperate kick.

Yoshii absorbs it.

Hakuryu throws another.

Yoshii grabs him.

He lifts—

Hakuryu twists!

He lands behind Yoshii!

SUPERKICK TO THE KNEE!

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

SUPERKICK TO THE FACE!

Yoshii falls backward.

Hakuryu collapses on top of him.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII'S SHOULDER COMES UP!

John Phillips: "AGAIN!"

The crowd erupts.

Hakuryu rolls away.

He lies on his back.

Staring upward.

Breathing heavily.

Mark Bravo: "Now we're getting somewhere different."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu's frustration?"

Mark Bravo: "No. Fatigue. He has spent this entire match fighting perfectly because he almost has to. Every mistake against Yoshii costs twice as much."

Hakuryu turns his head.

Sinja is there.

Watching.

Hakuryu slowly sits up.

He looks at his disciple.

Then toward Jed Dye.

Jed stands several feet away.

Perfectly still.

Hands folded in front of him.

Hakuryu looks back toward Sinja.

Sinja understands that look.

Watch.

Sinja turns his attention toward Jed.

John Phillips: "I think Hakuryu just gave Sinja an instruction."

Mark Bravo: "Didn't need words."

Hakuryu rises.

Yoshii rises.

Slowly.

Painfully.

Yoshii's left leg is barely supporting him now.

Hakuryu sees it.

He moves in.

Yoshii swings.

Hakuryu ducks.

Kick to the knee.

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu moves behind him.

He climbs onto Yoshii's back.

His arms wrap around the massive head and neck.

John Phillips: "Curse of the Dragon!"

Hakuryu tries to secure the Camel Clutch.

Yoshii immediately fights.

His hands reach for Hakuryu's grip.

Hakuryu pulls backward.

Yoshii's neck bends.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has it! Hakuryu has the submission!"

Mark Bravo: "And Yoshii's bad leg is underneath him! He can't get leverage!"

Yoshii roars.

Hakuryu pulls harder.

The referee kneels beside them.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has never been a man who quits easily, but this isn't about courage anymore!"

Mark Bravo: "Exactly. Your neck doesn't care how honorable you are."

Yoshii reaches.

The ropes are nowhere close.

Hakuryu adjusts his grip.

Yoshii's face tightens.

His movements begin to slow.

Sinja watches his master.

Then glances toward Jed.

Jed is staring into the ring.

No movement.

Yoshii tries to push upward.

The left leg collapses.

Hakuryu pulls him backward again.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is trapped!"

The referee asks him.

Yoshii shakes his head.

Yoshii: "NO!"

The crowd rallies behind him.

Crowd: "YO-SHII! YO-SHII! YO-SHII!"

Yoshii plants both hands.

He pushes.

Nothing.

Again.

Hakuryu stays attached.

Mark Bravo: "Look at Hakuryu's face. No emotion. No wasted movement. He's just waiting for Yoshii's body to give him the answer."

Yoshii pushes again.

This time his right leg gets underneath him.

Hakuryu's eyes widen.

Yoshii rises onto one knee.

John Phillips: "He's getting up!"

Hakuryu pulls harder.

Yoshii rises anyway.

One leg.

Then both.

Hakuryu is still on his back.

Mark Bravo: "You've got to be kidding me!"

Yoshii stands.

Hakuryu clings to him.

Yoshii stumbles backward.

Hakuryu realizes what's coming.

Too late.

Yoshii drives backward into the turnbuckles!

Hakuryu is crushed between Yoshii and the corner.

His grip breaks.

Yoshii staggers forward.

Hakuryu collapses behind him.

John Phillips: "Yoshii escaped the Curse of the Dragon!"

Mark Bravo: "He didn't escape it. He stood up with Hakuryu attached to his neck and turned himself into a wrecking ball."

Both men are exhausted.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu pulls himself up in the corner.

Yoshii charges.

Hakuryu gets a boot up!

Yoshii staggers.

Hakuryu climbs onto the middle rope.

He leaps—

Yoshii catches him!

John Phillips: "Again!"

Yoshii shifts Hakuryu onto his shoulder.

Hakuryu hammers elbows into the side of Yoshii's head.

Yoshii's grip loosens.

Hakuryu slips behind.

He shoves Yoshii toward the ropes.

Yoshii rebounds.

Hakuryu ducks underneath.

Yoshii hits the opposite ropes.

Hakuryu turns—

YOSHII RUNS THROUGH HIM!

Hakuryu flips inside out from the collision.

John Phillips: "MY GOD!"

Mark Bravo: "He just got hit by a truck!"

Yoshii drops onto Hakuryu.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE—NO!

HAKURYU GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

The building erupts.

Yoshii rolls onto his back.

His hands cover his face.

John Phillips: "How much more can either of these men take?!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the wrong question now."

John Phillips: "What's the right one?"

Mark Bravo: "Who makes the next mistake?"

Yoshii slowly rolls onto his side.

Hakuryu does the same.

Neither man stands.

The referee checks them.

Both wave him away.

Outside, Jed Dye paces.

Sinja follows him with his eyes.

Jed moves left.

Sinja adjusts.

Jed moves right.

Sinja adjusts again.

John Phillips: "Sinja hasn't taken his eyes off Jed Dye."

Mark Bravo: "Which might be exactly what Jed wants."

Sinja looks toward Bravo for just a fraction of a second.

Then back at Jed.

Jed smiles.

Mark Bravo: "See? I hate that guy."

Hakuryu reaches his knees.

Yoshii grabs the ropes.

Both begin to stand.

Hakuryu gets there first.

He limps toward Yoshii.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu kicks the damaged knee.

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu kicks him in the chest.
Yoshii absorbs it.
Another kick.
Yoshii's body rocks backward.
Hakuryu backs up.
Hands together.
Prayer.
He charges—
Yoshii catches him around the waist!
Hakuryu immediately fires elbows.
Yoshii keeps hold.
Hakuryu attacks the head.
Yoshii's grip begins to fail.
Hakuryu breaks free.
SUPERKICK!
Yoshii staggers.
Hakuryu throws another!
Yoshii drops to one knee.
John Phillips: "Hakuryu has him!"
Hakuryu looks toward the turnbuckles.
Then Yoshii.
Then the turnbuckles again.
Mark Bravo: "He's thinking Breath of the Dragon again."
Hakuryu heads toward the corner.
Yoshii remains on one knee.
Hakuryu begins climbing.
Sinja watches.
Jed watches.
Hakuryu reaches the top.
He turns.
Settles.
Hands together.
Prayer.

Yoshii slowly rises.

His back is to Hakuryu.

John Phillips: "Yoshii doesn't know where Hakuryu is!"

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu launches—

BREATH OF THE DRAGON!

THE DIVING HEADBUTT CONNECTS!

Both men crash to the mat!

John Phillips: "HE GOT IT!"

Mark Bravo: "COVER HIM!"

Hakuryu rolls through the impact.

He's dazed himself.

He reaches for Yoshii.

Pulls himself across the enormous body.

Hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII KICKS OUT!

Hakuryu is thrown off.

The Crypto.com Arena explodes.

John Phillips: "YOSHII KICKED OUT!"

Mark Bravo: "Breath of the Dragon! Dead center! And Yoshii survived it!"

Hakuryu remains on his knees.

This time he doesn't hide the reaction.

He stares at Yoshii.

Then at the referee.

The referee shows two fingers.

Hakuryu looks back at Yoshii.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu thought that was it."

Mark Bravo: "So did I."

Sinja stares into the ring.

Even he looks stunned.

Then his eyes move toward his master.

Hakuryu slowly rises.

His breathing changes.

For the first time tonight, the ritual calm is beginning to crack.

Not into panic.

Into urgency.

John Phillips: "This is where a championship match changes you. Hakuryu has studied Yoshii. He's damaged him. He's survived him. He just hit one of the biggest weapons he has."

Mark Bravo: "And Yoshii answered two."

Hakuryu looks down at Yoshii.

Then brings his hands together.

Longer prayer this time.

Across ringside, Jed Dye stops pacing.

He looks at Yoshii.

Then Hakuryu.

Then Sinja.

Sinja catches him.

Jed smiles innocently.

Sinja steps toward him.

Jed immediately backs away.

John Phillips: "Sinja isn't taking any chances now."

Mark Bravo: "Good. Because Jed Dye just watched Yoshii survive Breath of the Dragon, and instead of celebrating, he started looking around."

Sinja positions himself between Jed and the ring.

Jed raises both hands.

Jed Dye: "Personal space."

Sinja says nothing.

Jed Dye: "There are established societal conventions regarding personal space."

Nothing.

Jed Dye: "You are violating several."

Sinja takes another step toward him.

Jed backs away.

Mark Bravo: "Keep going, Sinja. Nevada's a big state."

Inside the ring, Hakuryu reaches for Yoshii.

Yoshii suddenly grabs Hakuryu's wrist.

The crowd erupts.

Hakuryu's eyes widen.

Yoshii begins to rise.

Slowly.

Using Hakuryu to pull himself upright.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is STILL coming!"

Hakuryu kicks the leg.

Yoshii nearly falls.

He doesn't release the wrist.

Hakuryu kicks again.

Yoshii grimaces.

Still holds on.

Hakuryu throws another—

Yoshii yanks him forward.

SUMO CHOP!

Hakuryu crumples.

Yoshii keeps hold of the wrist.

He pulls Hakuryu back up.

Another chop!

Hakuryu's legs buckle.

Yoshii roars.

He pulls Hakuryu in.

Hooks him.

Lifts—

The left leg gives!

Hakuryu drops behind him.

John Phillips: "THE KNEE!"

Hakuryu immediately attacks.

SUPERKICK TO THE BACK OF THE KNEE!

Yoshii falls forward.

Hakuryu grabs the head.

He pulls Yoshii backward.

Yoshii fights.

Hakuryu transitions.

He climbs onto Yoshii's back again.

John Phillips: "CURSE OF THE DRAGON!"

Hakuryu locks the Camel Clutch in a second time!

Yoshii's body bends.

The referee drops beside him.

Mark Bravo: "This is worse than the first time! Yoshii doesn't have the leg underneath him anymore!"

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii reaches.

Nothing.

He tries to crawl.

Nothing.

John Phillips: "There is nowhere to go!"

Yoshii's hand rises.

The crowd screams.

Hakuryu pulls harder.

Yoshii's hand trembles above the canvas.

John Phillips: "Yoshii may have to tap!"

Outside—

Jed Dye sees it.

His face changes.

No smile.

No theatrics.

His client is about to lose.

Sinja sees that change.

He moves toward Jed.

Jed backs away.

Further.

Sinja follows.

Mark Bravo: "Don't take your eyes off him, Sinja."

Jed backs around the corner.

Sinja follows.

Yoshii's hand lowers toward the canvas.

John Phillips: "He's fading!"

Jed suddenly points behind Sinja.

Jed Dye: "Your master."

Sinja doesn't look.

Jed Dye: "He's calling you."

Sinja still doesn't look.

Jed's expression tightens.

Mark Bravo: "That isn't going to work."

Sinja takes another step toward Jed.

Jed is running out of room.

Inside, Yoshii's hand hovers inches above the mat.

The referee watches it.

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii's eyes begin to close.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu may retain without Yoshii ever submitting!"

And then—

Yoshii's hand shoots outward.

He catches Hakuryu's fingers.

He begins peeling them apart.

One.

By.

One.

Mark Bravo: "WHAT?!"

Hakuryu desperately tries to maintain the grip.

Yoshii pulls.

The hold breaks!

Hakuryu immediately clubs Yoshii across the back of the head.

Yoshii rolls.

Hakuryu tries to reapply it.

Yoshii rolls again.

Hakuryu loses position.

Yoshii gets onto his back.
Hakuryu rises over him.
Yoshii kicks him away.
Hakuryu stumbles backward into the ropes.
John Phillips: "Yoshii broke the Curse of the Dragon!"
Mark Bravo: "Twice! He survived it twice!"
Hakuryu rebounds.
Yoshii rolls onto his knees.
Hakuryu charges.
Yoshii catches him around the waist!
He rises!
Hakuryu is lifted!
John Phillips: "YOSHII HAS HIM!"
Hakuryu hammers downward.
Yoshii keeps him up.
Hakuryu strikes again.
Yoshii staggers.
The damaged leg nearly folds.
But Yoshii roars.
He shifts Hakuryu higher.
Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu's in trouble!"
Sinja hears the roar.
His eyes instinctively move toward the ring.
Just for a second.
Jed Dye sees it.
And smiles.
John Phillips: "Sinja! Watch Jed!"
Too late.
Jed is already moving.
But not toward the ring.
He walks quickly around Sinja—
toward the opposite side.
Sinja realizes.

Turns.

Follows.

Inside the ring, Yoshii tries to complete the lift.

The knee gives.

Hakuryu slips down behind him.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii staggers into the ropes.

Hakuryu backs away.

Hands together.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu charges.

Yoshii swings.

Hakuryu ducks.

He hits the opposite ropes.

Comes back—

Yoshii scoops him up!

John Phillips: "CAUGHT!"

Hakuryu fights from Yoshii's arms.

Yoshii turns toward the center.

Sinja and Jed continue circling outside.

The referee moves around Yoshii to keep sight of Hakuryu's shoulders.

Jed sees the referee's back.

His eyes sharpen.

Sinja sees Jed see it.

And suddenly...

Sinja stops.

Mark Bravo: "Why'd Sinja stop?"

Jed takes another step.

Sinja doesn't follow.

He looks toward Hakuryu.

Hakuryu is fighting free from Yoshii.

Sinja looks back at Jed.

Then toward his master.

And remains where he is.

John Phillips: "I don't understand."

Mark Bravo: "I think Sinja does."

Jed hesitates.

He expected Sinja to chase him.

Sinja doesn't.

Inside, Hakuryu elbows free.

He lands behind Yoshii.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu kicks the knee.

Yoshii falls.

Hakuryu steps back.

Sinja watches.

Only watches.

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu told him he kept trying to solve problems that weren't his to solve."

John Phillips: "So Sinja isn't chasing Jed."

Mark Bravo: "He's trusting his master to win his own match."

Hakuryu looks toward Sinja.

Just briefly.

He sees him standing still.

Understanding.

Hakuryu turns back toward Yoshii.

His hands come together.

John Phillips: "That may be it."

Mark Bravo: "The test?"

John Phillips: "Maybe Hakuryu never wanted Sinja to stop Jed Dye."

Hakuryu closes his eyes.

Prayer.

John Phillips: "Maybe he wanted Sinja to finally understand that Hakuryu doesn't need him to."

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii begins to rise.

Jed Dye looks from Sinja...

to Hakuryu...

to Yoshii.

And for the first time tonight...

Jed realizes nobody is going to stop him except himself.

For several seconds, he doesn't move.

Neither does Sinja.

Inside the ring, Hakuryu does.

Yoshii has barely reached his feet when the champion drives another kick into the outside of the damaged left knee.

Yoshii grunts.

Hakuryu kicks again.

Yoshii reaches for him.

Hakuryu slips outside the enormous hands.

Kick.

Move.

Kick.

Move.

John Phillips: "Back to the plan. After everything these two have survived, Hakuryu is right back where he started."

Mark Bravo: "Because the plan worked, John. That's the part people miss. Yoshii surviving doesn't mean Hakuryu's strategy failed. Look at him. He can barely walk."

Yoshii swings wildly.

Hakuryu ducks.

Another kick.

Yoshii drops onto one knee.

Hakuryu moves behind him.

He takes several steps backward.

Yoshii begins pushing himself upright.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu measuring him."

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu charges.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii's head snaps backward.

He stumbles into the ropes.

But the ropes hold him upright.

Hakuryu looks at him.

Yoshii looks back.

And smiles.

Hakuryu's expression hardens.

Mark Bravo: "That's got to be infuriating."

John Phillips: "Yoshii can barely stand."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and he's smiling at the guy responsible."

Hakuryu charges again.

Yoshii steps forward.

SUMO CHOP!

Hakuryu's entire body recoils.

Yoshii grabs him before he can fall.

He hooks both arms around the champion.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has him!"

Yoshii lifts.

Hakuryu leaves the mat.

The left knee buckles.

Yoshii drops him.

Hakuryu lands on his feet.

Immediately—

SUPERKICK TO THE KNEE!

Yoshii falls.

John Phillips: "Every time! Every single time Yoshii needs that leg, Hakuryu has an answer waiting!"

Hakuryu grabs the ankle.

Yoshii rolls onto his back.

Hakuryu twists.

Yoshii kicks at him with the free leg.

Hakuryu avoids the first.

Not the second.

Yoshii's foot catches Hakuryu square in the chest.

Hakuryu flies backward.

Mark Bravo: "And Yoshii has an extra leg."

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

Yoshii tries to get up.

Hakuryu comes back—

Yoshii catches him by the throat!

The crowd erupts.

Hakuryu immediately attacks the wrist.

Yoshii pulls him closer.

Hakuryu kicks the bad leg.

Yoshii's grip loosens.

Hakuryu kicks again.

Yoshii releases.

Hakuryu spins.

BACKFLIP KICK!

It catches Yoshii underneath the jaw.

Yoshii falls backward.

Hakuryu lands hard but immediately rolls onto his knees.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is down again!"

Hakuryu looks toward the corner.

The crowd recognizes it.

Mark Bravo: "He's thinking about it."

Hakuryu looks at Yoshii.

Then the turnbuckles.

John Phillips: "Breath of the Dragon connected once already. Yoshii survived it."

Mark Bravo: "Then hit him with it twice."

Hakuryu moves toward the corner.

He steps through the ropes.

Begins climbing.

Yoshii remains flat on his back.

Sinja watches his master.

Jed Dye watches Yoshii.

Hakuryu reaches the top rope.

He turns.

Settles into position.

His palms meet.

Prayer.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is taking his time."

Mark Bravo: "That's what he does."

John Phillips: "But Yoshii is moving."

Yoshii rolls onto his side.

Hakuryu's eyes remain closed.

Yoshii gets onto one elbow.

Then one knee.

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii pushes upward.

Hakuryu adjusts.

He waits.

Yoshii gets one foot underneath himself.

Hakuryu remains perched.

Mark Bravo: "He's not committed yet."

Yoshii rises.

Turns.

Hakuryu launches!

Yoshii steps sideways!

Hakuryu sees it!

He twists in midair—

And lands on his feet!

The crowd explodes.

John Phillips: "HAKURYU LANDED IT!"

But Yoshii is already moving.

Hakuryu turns—

SUMO CHOP!

Hakuryu collapses.

Mark Bravo: "Great landing. Terrible neighborhood."

Yoshii falls on top of him.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

HAKURYU GETS A SHOULDER UP!

John Phillips: "Another near fall!"

Yoshii rolls away.

He lies on his back beside Hakuryu.

Neither man moves.

John Phillips: "Think about what we've seen. Hakuryu has survived Yoshii's power. Yoshii has survived Breath of the Dragon and the Curse of the Dragon twice. Both men have had opportunities to end this."

Mark Bravo: "And both of them are running out of ways to do it."

The referee begins checking on them.

Hakuryu raises a hand.

Yoshii raises one too.

Still fighting.

The crowd applauds.

Outside, Sinja stands almost perfectly still.

Jed Dye doesn't.

He paces again.

Slowly.

Sinja notices.

But this time...

He doesn't follow.

John Phillips: "There's the difference."

Mark Bravo: "Yep."

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight, every time Jed moved, Sinja moved with him."

Mark Bravo: "Because Jed was controlling Sinja without touching him. Sinja was so desperate not to fail Hakuryu again that all Jed had to do was twitch and Sinja reacted."

Jed looks toward Sinja.

Sinja looks into the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Not anymore."

Jed stops pacing.

He looks irritated.

John Phillips: "If this is the lesson Hakuryu wanted his disciple to learn, Sinja appears to finally understand it."

Mark Bravo: "Don't create the mistake trying to prevent one."

Hakuryu gets to his knees.

Yoshii rolls toward the ropes.

Hakuryu stands.

Yoshii pulls himself up.

Hakuryu advances.

Yoshii raises one hand.

Hakuryu stops.

Yoshii points at him.

Then pounds his own chest.

Yoshii: "Come."

The crowd reacts.

Hakuryu stares at him.

John Phillips: "Again?"

Mark Bravo: "Apparently Yoshii didn't learn anything from the first time."

Yoshii raises his hand.

Hakuryu looks down at the damaged leg.

Then back at Yoshii.

Yoshii understands.

He shakes his head.

Yoshii: "Come."

Hakuryu's palms meet.

Short prayer.

Then he steps forward.

Yoshii swings.

Hakuryu ducks.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu kicks the knee.

Yoshii drops.

Mark Bravo: "Nope."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu isn't indulging him this time!"

Mark Bravo: "He tried the honor exchange already. Almost got his head chopped off. Lesson learned."

Hakuryu kicks Yoshii across the chest.

Yoshii rocks backward.

Another kick.

Yoshii stays on his knee.

Another.

Yoshii catches the leg!

Hakuryu jumps—

ENZIGURI!

Yoshii releases him.

Hakuryu lands.

Yoshii sways.

Hakuryu grabs the arm.

He moves underneath.

Yoshii suddenly finds himself across Hakuryu's shoulders.

The arena comes alive.

John Phillips: "WAIT!"

Hakuryu's legs shake.

Yoshii's feet leave the canvas.

For one incredible moment...

Hakuryu has all five hundred eighty-three pounds elevated.

Mark Bravo: "NO WAY!"

Hakuryu roars.

He tries to turn Yoshii into position for the Koya Otoshi—

His legs give!

Yoshii drops behind him.

Hakuryu collapses onto one knee.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu almost had him!"

Mark Bravo: "I take back everything I said earlier. He actually got Yoshii off the ground!"

Yoshii stumbles backward.

Hakuryu gets up.

He turns—

Yoshii charges!

Hakuryu moves!

Yoshii hits the ropes.

Hakuryu turns.

Yoshii rebounds—

Hakuryu catches the arm!

He pulls Yoshii down!

CRUCIFIX!

Yoshii's shoulders hit the mat!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII POWERS OUT!

John Phillips: "Hakuryu nearly stole it!"

Both men scramble up.

Hakuryu is faster.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii staggers.

Another SUPERKICK!

Yoshii falls against the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu charges.

Handspring—

BACK ELBOW!

Yoshii slumps.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is pouring it on!"

Hakuryu grabs Yoshii's head.

He pulls.

Yoshii stumbles out of the corner.

Hakuryu moves behind him.

He attacks the knee again.

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu looks toward the ropes.

Then down at Yoshii.

His palms meet.

Mark Bravo: "He's got Yoshii exactly where he wants him."

Hakuryu runs toward the ropes.

He leaps onto the middle rope.

Balances.

Walks.

John Phillips: "Praying Rope Walk!"

Hakuryu leaps—

CHOP!

Yoshii is knocked flat.

Hakuryu covers!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII KICKS OUT!

John Phillips: "NO!"

Hakuryu sits up.

This time the frustration is unmistakable.

He looks at the referee.

Two.

Hakuryu closes his eyes.

Breathes.

His palms come together.

Mark Bravo: "And look at that. He's resetting himself."

John Phillips: "Hakuryu felt the frustration. He's trying to put it away."

Mark Bravo: "That's discipline. You don't pretend the emotion isn't there. You control what it makes you do."

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii is still down.

The champion stands.

He moves toward the corner.

Sinja watches.

Jed Dye watches.

Hakuryu climbs.

John Phillips: "Third attempt."

Mark Bravo: "If Breath of the Dragon connects again, I don't care what Yoshii weighs."

Hakuryu reaches the top.

He turns.

Yoshii remains down.

Hakuryu kneels.

His palms meet.

The entire arena begins to rise.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu may be seconds away from retaining the United States Championship."

Jed Dye looks into the ring.

Then at Yoshii.

Then at the referee.

Then...

at the United States Championship resting at ringside.

Mark Bravo: "Don't."

Jed's eyes remain on the championship.

John Phillips: "Jed."

Jed takes one step toward it.

Sinja sees him.

Sinja turns.

Jed stops.

Sinja stares.

Jed looks back at him.

Hakuryu remains perched above the ring.

Praying.

Yoshii begins to move.

Jed takes another step toward the championship.

Sinja's body tenses.

He looks toward Hakuryu.

Then Jed.

John Phillips: "Sinja sees him."

Mark Bravo: "And now we find out what Sinja thinks the lesson actually was."

Jed bends slightly.

Sinja takes a step.

Then stops himself.

His hands clench.

His breathing becomes visible.

But he does not go after Jed.

John Phillips: "He's staying."

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu told him tonight was about understanding. Sinja thinks he understands."

Jed looks almost surprised.

He expected resistance.

There is none.

But before Jed can do anything—

Yoshii rolls toward the ropes.

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

The opportunity is changing.

Hakuryu rises from the praying position.

Yoshii grabs the ropes and pulls himself up.

Hakuryu waits.

Yoshii turns.

HakURYU FLIES!

BREATH OF THE DRAGON—

YOSHII CATCHES HIM!

The building erupts.

Hakuryu is caught across Yoshii's enormous chest!

John Phillips: "YOSHII CAUGHT THE HEADBUTT!"

Mark Bravo: "HOW?!"

Yoshii staggers backward under the impact.

His left leg nearly collapses.

But he holds Hakuryu.

Hakuryu realizes where he is.

He immediately starts throwing elbows.

Yoshii absorbs one.

Two.

Three.

His grip loosens.

Hakuryu begins to slide free.

Yoshii roars.

He tightens his grip again.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has Hakuryu trapped!"

Yoshii shifts him.

Hakuryu fights desperately.

Another elbow.

Another.

Yoshii's bad leg shakes.

Hakuryu nearly escapes.

Yoshii adjusts one final time—

AND DRIVES HAKURYU INTO THE CANVAS!

The ring shakes.

The crowd explodes.

John Phillips: "GOOD GOD!"

Mark Bravo: "COVER HIM!"

Yoshii rolls Hakuryu onto his back.

He falls across the champion.

The referee drops.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

HAKURYU GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

Yoshii falls backward.

The arena is deafening.

John Phillips: "HAKURYU SURVIVES!"

Mark Bravo: "I don't know what either man has left!"

Yoshii stares at the ceiling.

Hakuryu lies beside him.

Sinja finally exhales.

Jed Dye slowly straightens.

The championship remains untouched.

For now.

John Phillips: "And notice something else. Jed Dye had an opportunity."

Mark Bravo: "He did."

John Phillips: "He didn't take it."

Mark Bravo: "Don't give him a medal yet."

Yoshii begins to sit up.

Hakuryu rolls onto his stomach.

Mark Bravo: "Jed doesn't need every opportunity."

Yoshii gets onto one knee.

Hakuryu crawls toward the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "He only needs the right one."

Yoshii reaches his feet.

Hakuryu does the same.

They turn.

They see each other.

Neither man backs away.

John Phillips: "Whatever happens from here, this has become exactly the match Yoshii asked for."

Mark Bravo: "Two men trying to find out which one can put the other one down."

Yoshii raises his fists.

Hakuryu brings his palms together.

John Phillips: "And we're still not done."

Hakuryu lowers his hands.

Yoshii steps forward.

Neither man has much speed left.

Hakuryu throws the first kick.

Yoshii takes it across the chest.

He answers with a chop.

Hakuryu absorbs it.

Another kick.

Another chop.

John Phillips: "We're past strategy now."

Mark Bravo: "No, the strategy's still there. They're just too exhausted to hide it anymore."

Hakuryu kicks the left thigh.

Yoshii immediately answers with a right-handed chop.

Mark Bravo: "See? Hakuryu still wants that leg. Yoshii still wants one clean connection. They're just standing in front of each other to get it."

Hakuryu kicks.

Yoshii chops.

Hakuryu kicks.

Yoshii chops.

Hakuryu staggers.

Yoshii staggers.

The crowd rises with each strike.

Hakuryu suddenly changes levels.

LOW KICK!

Yoshii's left leg folds.

He drops onto one knee.

Hakuryu immediately spins.

TORNADO KICK!

Yoshii falls onto his back.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu got him!"

Hakuryu drops across Yoshii.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII KICKS OUT!

Hakuryu rolls away.

He slaps the mat once.

Hard.

Then immediately stops himself.

Eyes close.

Breath in.

Breath out.

Palms together.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is having to actively control himself now."

Mark Bravo: "Because this isn't normal for him. Hakuryu waits for the opening, takes the opening, and breaks you with it. Tonight he's found openings all night and Yoshii keeps surviving."

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii is rolling toward the corner.

Hakuryu gets up.

He follows.

Yoshii reaches the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu kicks the left leg.

Yoshii grabs the top rope.

Another kick.

Yoshii grimaces.

Another.

The leg gives.

Yoshii drops into a seated position against the bottom turnbuckle.

John Phillips: "Yoshii can't get out of the corner!"

Hakuryu backs away.

Yoshii looks up.

Hakuryu charges.

RUNNING KNEE!

Yoshii's head snaps backward against the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu backs away again.

Mark Bravo: "Again."

Hakuryu charges.

SECOND RUNNING KNEE!

Yoshii slumps.

Hakuryu grabs the ropes.

Pulls Yoshii out of the corner.

The former champion collapses onto his back.

Hakuryu covers.

Both legs hooked as best he can manage.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII KICKS OUT!

John Phillips: "YOSHII WILL NOT STAY DOWN!"

Hakuryu rolls onto his knees.

This time he doesn't look at the referee.

He knows.

Mark Bravo: "And that's important. Hakuryu isn't wasting time asking whether it was three anymore."

John Phillips: "He knows it wasn't."

Mark Bravo: "So find something else."

Hakuryu does.

He grabs Yoshii's left ankle.

Yoshii immediately kicks with the right.

Hakuryu absorbs the boot against his shoulder and holds on.

Yoshii kicks again.

Hakuryu still holds on.

He twists the ankle.

Yoshii rolls onto his stomach.

Hakuryu drops his weight onto the knee.

Yoshii roars.

John Phillips: "Back to the leg! After all of this, Hakuryu is trying to finish the work he started at the opening bell!"

Hakuryu pulls the leg backward.

Yoshii claws at the canvas.

The ropes are several feet away.

Hakuryu leans back.

Yoshii pushes himself up on his forearms.

He tries to crawl.

Hakuryu drags him backward.

Mark Bravo: "That's the scary part about Hakuryu. He's exhausted, he's frustrated, he's taken everything Yoshii can throw at him, and somewhere in his head he's still following the same blueprint."

Yoshii drags himself forward.

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii moves another inch.

Hakuryu sits deeper.

Yoshii stops.

The referee asks him.

Yoshii shakes his head.

Yoshii: "NO!"

Outside, Jed Dye is almost bouncing in place.

Jed Dye: "Forward! Forward! Your proximal distance is decreasing!"

Mark Bravo: "He means crawl."

John Phillips: "I know what he means."

Mark Bravo: "I was helping."

Yoshii reaches.

Still too far.

Hakuryu pulls harder.

Yoshii's hand rises.

For a moment, it hovers.

Jed stops talking.

Sinja watches.

The crowd gets louder.

Yoshii's hand lowers.

Not to tap.

To plant against the mat.

He pushes.

His massive body inches forward.

John Phillips: "He's moving!"

Hakuryu tries to drag him back.

Yoshii moves again.

Another few inches.

His fingers reach.

Miss.

He reaches again.

The bottom rope is inches away.

Hakuryu sees it.

He releases the leg.

Yoshii's hand grabs the rope anyway.

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu knew the break was coming."

Hakuryu stands.

Yoshii remains facedown.

Hakuryu looks toward the turnbuckles.

John Phillips: "Again?"

Mark Bravo: "Why not? Breath of the Dragon is the closest Hakuryu has come to putting Yoshii away."

Hakuryu walks toward the corner.

Slowly.

He steps onto the bottom rope.

Then the middle.

Yoshii hasn't moved.

Hakuryu reaches the top.

He turns.

Palms together.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has taken one Breath of the Dragon clean. He's caught another. He's avoided another. Hakuryu is going back to it."

Mark Bravo: "Because eventually one of these guys has to run out of miracles."

Hakuryu settles into the praying position.

Yoshii begins to push himself up.

Hakuryu waits.

Yoshii reaches one knee.

The bad leg drags behind him.

Hakuryu waits.

Yoshii rises.

Hakuryu opens his eyes.

Yoshii turns.

Hakuryu launches—

YOSHII SIDESTEPS!

Hakuryu adjusts in the air again!

He lands on his feet!

But this time Yoshii is ready.

SUMO HEADBUTT!

Hakuryu drops straight down.

John Phillips: "HEADBUTT!"

Yoshii nearly falls with him.

He catches the ropes.

Hakuryu lies motionless for a beat.

Yoshii looks down.

Then toward the opposite corner.

The crowd realizes it before commentary does.

John Phillips: "Wait a minute."

Yoshii grabs Hakuryu by the wrist.

He drags the champion across the canvas.

Toward the corner.

Mark Bravo: "Oh."

Yoshii pulls Hakuryu into position.

Face-up.

Against the turnbuckles.

John Phillips: "Yoshii Bomb!"

The crowd erupts.

Yoshii grabs the ropes.

He puts his right foot on the bottom rope.

Then the middle.

The damaged left leg trembles underneath him.

Mark Bravo: "Can he even climb?"

Yoshii tries.

The left knee buckles.

He drops back to the mat.

John Phillips: "He can't!"

Hakuryu begins moving.

Yoshii knows the opportunity is disappearing.

He grabs the ropes again.

Right foot up.

Left foot follows.

The knee shakes violently.

Yoshii grits his teeth.

Mark Bravo: "That's five hundred eighty-three pounds balanced on a leg Hakuryu has spent this entire match destroying."

Yoshii pulls himself onto the second rope.

The crowd rises.

Hakuryu's eyes open.

He sees Yoshii above him.

Yoshii: "YOSHII!"

Hakuryu rolls!

Yoshii drops!

THE YOSHII BOMB MISSES!

The ring shakes as Yoshii crashes into the canvas!

John Phillips: "NOBODY HOME!"

Mark Bravo: "And that might have destroyed the rest of Yoshii's leg!"

Yoshii rolls onto his side clutching the knee.

Hakuryu pulls himself up using the ropes.

He sees Yoshii.

He sees the leg.

Hakuryu's expression changes.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu knows."

Mark Bravo: "This is it. This is the opening he's been building for since the bell."

Hakuryu walks toward Yoshii.

Yoshii tries to rise.

The left leg will not support him.

Hakuryu kicks it.

Yoshii falls.

Another kick.

Yoshii rolls toward the ropes.

Hakuryu follows.

Another.

Yoshii tries to protect the knee.

Hakuryu changes angles.

Kick to the ribs.

Yoshii rolls over.

Hakuryu backs up.

He measures.

Yoshii pushes himself onto his knees.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii falls backward.

Hakuryu covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

YOSHII KICKS OUT!

John Phillips: "STILL!"

Hakuryu sits upright.

For several seconds, he just stares.

Mark Bravo: "I don't know what else you want him to do."

John Phillips: "Neither does Hakuryu."

Hakuryu looks toward Sinja.

Sinja meets his eyes.

Hakuryu doesn't signal.

Doesn't speak.

Doesn't ask for anything.

Sinja doesn't move.

Hakuryu gives the slightest nod.

John Phillips: "There."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

John Phillips: "Whatever this final opportunity was supposed to teach Sinja... I think Hakuryu just got his answer."

Sinja lowers his head.

Not in shame.

In acknowledgment.

Across ringside, Jed Dye sees the exchange.

He looks at Sinja.

Then Hakuryu.

Then Yoshii.

His client is still down.

Jed looks troubled.

Not because Yoshii is hurt.

Because Yoshii is losing.

Mark Bravo: "And there's Jed."

John Phillips: "He's stayed out of it since Yoshii confronted him."

Mark Bravo: "Because Yoshii was still surviving."

Hakuryu grabs Yoshii.

He pulls him up.

Yoshii can barely stand.

Hakuryu moves behind him.

Kick to the knee.

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu hooks the arms.

He tries to pull Yoshii backward.

Yoshii resists.

Hakuryu changes his grip.

Yoshii reaches for him.

Hakuryu kicks the leg again.

Yoshii collapses onto both knees.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is breaking him down piece by piece."

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

He comes back—

Yoshii explodes upward!

FRONT POWERSLAM!

Hakuryu is driven into the mat!

John Phillips: "WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?!"

Yoshii falls beside him.

He can't cover.

Mark Bravo: "That's instinct. That's everything Yoshii had left firing at once!"

The referee checks both men.

Yoshii crawls.

One arm at a time.

Hakuryu lies on his back.

Yoshii reaches him.

Drapes an arm across his chest.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

HAKURYU KICKS OUT!

John Phillips: "NOT ENOUGH!"

Yoshii's head drops.

He stays there for a moment.

Forehead against Hakuryu's chest.

Both exhausted.

John Phillips: "Yoshii was seconds away from losing this match, found one burst of power, and even that wasn't enough."

Mark Bravo: "They're empty."

John Phillips: "And yet neither one is staying down."

Yoshii rolls away.

Hakuryu rolls toward the opposite side.

The crowd gives both men a sustained ovation.

Yoshii reaches the ropes.

Hakuryu reaches his.

They begin pulling themselves upright.

On opposite sides of the ring.

Yoshii gets there first.

Barely.

Hakuryu turns toward him.

Yoshii takes one step.

The knee gives.

He catches himself on the ropes.

Hakuryu sees it.

Hakuryu charges.

Yoshii tries to turn.

Too slow.

SUPERKICK TO THE KNEE!

Yoshii collapses against the ropes.

Hakuryu grabs him.

Pulls him toward the center.

Yoshii can barely resist.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has him away from the ropes."

Hakuryu steps over Yoshii.

He reaches for the head.

John Phillips: "Curse of the Dragon again!"

Yoshii immediately realizes it.

He grabs Hakuryu's wrists.

Hakuryu fights to lock his hands.

Yoshii fights to keep them apart.

Mark Bravo: "If Hakuryu gets this fully locked now, I don't think Yoshii gets out a third time."

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii's arms begin to give.

Hakuryu's fingers inch closer together.

Yoshii strains.

Hakuryu nearly has it.

Outside, Jed Dye's eyes widen.

John Phillips: "Jed knows it too."

Sinja looks at Jed.

Jed looks back.

Neither moves.

Hakuryu's hands come together.

The hold is almost locked.

Yoshii's resistance weakens.

Jed takes half a step forward.

Sinja sees it.

He does not react.

Jed takes another.

Sinja stays where he is.

Mark Bravo: "Sinja isn't taking the bait."

Jed looks at him.

Sinja's attention remains on his master.

Hakuryu pulls Yoshii's head backward.

Yoshii groans.

The referee moves directly in front of Yoshii.

Asking if he submits.

Yoshii shakes his head.

The referee leans closer.

Hakuryu pulls harder.

Yoshii's hand begins to rise.

Jed sees the referee's position.

Sees Sinja.

Sees Yoshii's hand.

And something changes.

John Phillips: "Jed..."

Jed walks toward the ring.

Sinja turns his head.

Jed stops.

Sinja looks at him.

For one long moment...

they stare at one another.

Then Sinja looks back into the ring.

Jed's brow furrows.

He doesn't understand.

Mark Bravo: "Sinja's done playing his game."

Yoshii's hand lowers.

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii's eyes close.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is fading again!"

Jed looks at his client.

Then at Hakuryu.

Then at the referee.

And this time...

Jed doesn't look at Sinja again.

Mark Bravo: "I don't like this."

Yoshii's hand drops to the canvas.

Not a tap.

It simply falls.

The referee grabs Yoshii's wrist.

John Phillips: "The referee is checking him!"

The arm rises.

Falls.

ONE!

The crowd gets louder.

The referee lifts it again.

Yoshii's arm falls.

TWO!

John Phillips: "ONE MORE AND HAKURYU RETAINS!"

Hakuryu pulls harder.

Eyes closed.

Fully focused on Yoshii.

Sinja watches his master.

Yoshii's arm is lifted a third time.

Jed moves.

Fast.

Mark Bravo: "JED!"

Yoshii's arm starts to fall—

AND STOPS!

The crowd erupts!

Yoshii's fist clenches.

John Phillips: "HE'S STILL IN IT!"

Yoshii begins fighting again.

Hakuryu's eyes open.

Yoshii plants both hands.

He tries to rise.

Hakuryu pulls.

Yoshii gets one knee underneath himself.

The bad leg won't cooperate.

Hakuryu leans backward.

Yoshii nearly collapses again.

Then reaches behind.

Grabs Hakuryu's wrist.

Peels.

Hakuryu fights.

Yoshii peels another finger loose.

Another.

The grip breaks!

Yoshii rolls.

Hakuryu is thrown forward.

Both men scramble.

Yoshii reaches one knee.

Hakuryu turns.

SUPERKICK!

Yoshii falls backward into the corner.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu shut him down again!"

Hakuryu looks at Yoshii.

Looks at the corner.

Then looks upward.

Mark Bravo: "He's going back up."

Hakuryu turns.

Heads toward the ropes.

Yoshii is seated against the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu begins climbing.

Outside...

Jed Dye is now directly beside the corner.

Sinja sees him.

John Phillips: "Jed is too close."

Sinja takes one step.

Stops.

His eyes move from Jed...

to Hakuryu.

Hakuryu climbs onto the middle rope.

Jed looks up.

Hakuryu climbs toward the top.

Yoshii still hasn't turned around.

Mark Bravo: "Yoshii doesn't see any of this."

Hakuryu reaches the top rope.

His back is momentarily toward Jed.

Jed looks at Yoshii.

Yoshii is pulling himself up with the opposite ropes.

Still facing away.

Jed looks at the referee.

The referee is watching Yoshii.

Jed looks at Sinja.

Sinja stands several feet away.

Watching.

John Phillips: "Don't do it."

Hakuryu turns atop the ropes.

He begins to settle into the praying position.

Jed reaches upward—

Sinja moves!

John Phillips: "SINJA!"

Sinja rushes toward the corner.

Jed grabs Hakuryu's boot.

Just once.

A sharp tug.

Hakuryu's balance breaks.

His foot slips from the top rope.

Hakuryu drops hard onto the turnbuckle!

John Phillips: "JED DYE JUST PULLED HAKURYU OFF BALANCE!"

Mark Bravo: "AND YOSHII DIDN'T SEE IT!"

Sinja reaches Jed a fraction too late.

He grabs Jed by the jacket.

Jed's eyes go wide.

Jed Dye: "Release me!"

Sinja shoves Jed backward.

Jed stumbles into the barricade.

John Phillips: "Sinja tried to stop him!"

Mark Bravo: "He understood! He finally understood! This wasn't Hakuryu's problem to solve because Hakuryu couldn't even see it!"

Sinja turns immediately back toward the ring.

Hakuryu is hung awkwardly against the corner.

Yoshii turns around.

He sees Hakuryu.

Nothing else.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has no idea what happened!"

Yoshii sees an opening.

The same kind of opening Hakuryu has spent the entire match taking.

Yoshii moves.

He limps across the ring.

Hakuryu tries to free himself.

Yoshii grabs him.

Pulls him away from the turnbuckles.

Hakuryu fires an elbow.

Yoshii absorbs it.

Another elbow.

Yoshii nearly loses him.

Hakuryu kicks the bad leg.

Yoshii buckles.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is still fighting!"

Hakuryu slips free.

He lands behind Yoshii.

SUPERKICK TO THE KNEE!

Yoshii drops.

Hakuryu hits the ropes.

He comes back—

Yoshii turns!

SUMO HEADBUTT!

Hakuryu staggers backward into the corner.

Yoshii sees him.

The crowd rises.

John Phillips: "Yoshii has him in the corner!"

Yoshii charges.

YOSHII SPLASH!

At the final moment, Yoshii turns backward and crushes Hakuryu beneath his full frame!

Hakuryu crumples.

Yoshii turns.

Looks down.

Then looks up at the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, no."

John Phillips: "Yoshii tried this earlier and the knee couldn't hold him!"

Yoshii grabs the ropes.

Right foot onto the bottom rope.

Left foot follows.

His knee shakes.

Sinja reaches the apron.

He sees what's coming.

Sinja: "MASTER!"

Hakuryu barely moves.

Yoshii climbs.

One rope.

Then the second.

Five hundred eighty-three pounds perched above the champion.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has to move!"

Yoshii steadies himself.

He looks down.

Hakuryu's eyes open.

Too late.

Yoshii throws his head back.

Yoshii: "YOSHIIIIII!"

YOSHII BOMB!

Yoshii drops from the second rope and crushes Hakuryu beneath the seated splash!

The ring buckles beneath the impact.

The crowd explodes.

John Phillips: "YOSHII BOMB!"

Mark Bravo: "HAKURYU'S DONE!"

Yoshii rolls backward.

Hakuryu doesn't move.

Yoshii crawls.

He throws himself across the champion.

The referee drops.

ONE!

Sinja stares into the ring.

TWO!

Jed Dye grips the barricade.

THREE!

The bell rings.

The Crypto.com Arena erupts.

Yoshii rolls off Hakuryu and collapses onto his back.

For several seconds, he doesn't even realize what has happened.

John Phillips: "YOSHII HAS DONE IT!"

Mark Bravo: "Yoshii has regained the United States Championship!"

The referee retrieves the title.

Yoshii slowly sits up.

The referee kneels beside him.

Places the United States Championship into his hands.

Yoshii looks down at it.

His face lights up.

He clutches the championship to his chest.

John Phillips: "What a fight."

Yoshii struggles to his feet.

The referee raises his arm.

Yoshii raises the United States Championship with the other.

John Phillips: "Yoshii asked for one thing. No Sinja. No Jed. No problems. Only fight."

Bravo doesn't answer immediately.

The camera cuts to Jed Dye.

Jed adjusts his jacket.

Sinja stares at him.

John Phillips: "Mark?"

Mark Bravo: "That's what Yoshii thinks he got."

The camera returns to Yoshii.

He is smiling.

Exhausted.

Battered.

His left leg barely supporting him.

But smiling.

He looks down at Hakuryu.

Yoshii's expression becomes serious.

He lowers the championship.

Hakuryu begins to stir.

Yoshii waits.

John Phillips: "Yoshii didn't see Jed Dye."

Mark Bravo: "No."

John Phillips: "The referee didn't see Jed Dye."

Mark Bravo: "No."

John Phillips: "But we did."

Mark Bravo: "And Sinja did."

Sinja slides into the ring.

He immediately goes to Hakuryu.

Not touching him.

Not yet.

Waiting.

Hakuryu rolls onto one knee.

He looks toward Sinja.

Sinja lowers his head.

Sinja: "Master..."

Hakuryu raises one hand.

Sinja stops speaking.

Hakuryu looks across the ring.

Yoshii stands there with the United States Championship.

Yoshii bows his head.

Respect.

Hakuryu stares at him.

There is no accusation in Yoshii's face.

No smugness.

No knowledge.

Just exhaustion and respect for the man he believes he defeated in a fight.

Hakuryu's eyes move past him.

To Jed Dye.

Jed is applauding.

Very slowly.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, Hakuryu knows."

John Phillips: "He may not know exactly what happened."

Mark Bravo: "Look at him. He knows something happened."

Hakuryu looks at Sinja.

Sinja meets his eyes.

Sinja nods once.

Confirmation.

Hakuryu's expression goes completely still.

John Phillips: "And Sinja just confirmed it."

Yoshii turns toward Jed.

He raises the championship.

Jed's face instantly changes.

Wide smile.

Arms raised.

Jed Dye: "Precisely as projected!"

Yoshii points toward him.

Yoshii: "Yoshii win."

Jed freezes for half a second.

Then nods enthusiastically.

Jed Dye: "Yes! Correct! Yoshii wins!"

Yoshii smiles.

He raises the championship again.

John Phillips: "Yoshii believes he did this the way he demanded it be done."

Mark Bravo: "And that's what makes this ugly."

Hakuryu rises with help only from the ropes.

Sinja stays close but does not touch him.

Hakuryu looks at Yoshii.

Then Jed.

Then Sinja.

John Phillips: "Sinja tried to stop Jed."

Mark Bravo: "He did. He was late, but he finally understood the difference."

John Phillips: "The difference between interfering in Hakuryu's fight and protecting Hakuryu's fight from somebody else's interference."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly."

Hakuryu looks at his disciple one more time.

And gives him a small nod.

Sinja's shoulders loosen.

Not much.

But enough.

John Phillips: "There's his answer."

Mark Bravo: "Sinja passed."

Hakuryu turns toward Jed.

The calm returns.

But it is different now.

Colder.

Jed is too busy celebrating to notice.

Yoshii raises the United States Championship high over his head.

The crowd applauds the new champion.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is once again the United States Champion after an extraordinary fight."

Mark Bravo: "And he earned every bit of that fight."

Bravo pauses.

Mark Bravo: "But he didn't earn that opening."

The replay begins.

Hakuryu climbing.

Yoshii facing away.

The referee watching Yoshii.

Jed reaching upward.

The tug on Hakuryu's boot.

Sinja moving a fraction too late.

Hakuryu crashing onto the turnbuckle.

John Phillips: "There it is."

The replay freezes on Jed's hand around Hakuryu's boot.

John Phillips: "Yoshii never saw it."

The replay continues.

Hakuryu fighting free afterward.

Yoshii's headbutt.

Yoshii Splash.

Yoshii Bomb.

Three.

Mark Bravo: "And let's be fair. Jed didn't hit the Yoshi Bomb. Jed didn't survive Breath of the Dragon. Jed didn't escape the Curse of the Dragon twice. Yoshi did all of that."

John Phillips: "But when Hakuryu was climbing and Yoshi was in trouble, Jed Dye created an opening that did not belong to Yoshi."

Mark Bravo: "And the new champion doesn't know it."

Back live.

Yoshi is at ringside now.

He stops beside a young fan.

Despite barely being able to put weight on the left leg, Yoshi bends down.

He lets the child touch the United States Championship.

Yoshi smiles.

Jed catches up behind him.

He places a hand on Yoshi's shoulder.

Yoshi immediately looks at the hand.

Jed removes it.

Jed Dye: "Congratulations."

Yoshi nods.

Yoshi: "Good fight."

Jed glances toward the ring.

Hakuryu is staring directly at him.

Jed's smile fades.

Only for a moment.

Then returns.

Yoshi doesn't notice.

John Phillips: "This isn't finished."

Mark Bravo: "Not even close."

Hakuryu stands in the center of the ring.

Sinja beside him.

No United States Championship around his waist.

Hakuryu's eyes remain fixed on Jed Dye.

Sinja looks at his master.

Then at Jed.

He understands.

Yoshii raises the championship one final time on the ramp.

The crowd cheers.

Hakuryu does not look at the championship.

He looks at the man standing beside the champion.

John Phillips: "Yoshii leaves Los Angeles believing he won the fight he asked for."

Mark Bravo: "He did win the fight."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Jed Dye changed the moment that decided it."

Hakuryu slowly brings his palms together.

But he isn't looking at Yoshii.

He's looking at Jed.

John Phillips: "Yoshii is the new United States Champion."

Mark Bravo: "And sooner or later, somebody's going to have to tell him why."

The Hardware Adds Up

Segment

The camera finds Katy Winters backstage as the roar from the arena still bleeds through the walls of Crypto.com Arena.

She isn't alone.

Bianca Page stands beside her.

And Bianca looks like she has been in a Hardcore match.

Her hair is a mess. There are already bruises beginning to form. One arm hangs a little lower than the other after crashing through the table earlier tonight.

But wrapped tightly around her waist is the UTA Hardcore Championship.

Ace Andrews stands beside her, looking considerably less damaged and considerably more pleased with himself.

Katy Winters: "Bianca, earlier tonight you defeated Emily Hightower to become the new UTA Hardcore Champion. Eight days ago, when Emily revealed that this was the championship you would be competing for, you didn't exactly hide your disappointment."

Bianca looks down at the championship.

She runs her fingers across the faceplate.

Bianca Page: "I didn't."

She looks back at Katy.

Bianca Page: "Because I asked Emily Hightower for a championship opportunity and I thought she was being cute."

Ace smirks.

Bianca Page: "I thought she reached into the Hightower family junk drawer, pulled out the Hardcore Championship and said, 'Here. Play with this one first.'"

Bianca looks at the belt again.

Bianca Page: "Then she hit me with a baking sheet."

Ace nods thoughtfully.

Ace Andrews: "Very educational."

Bianca shoots him a look.

Bianca Page: "Then a chair."

Ace Andrews: "Continuing education."

Bianca Page: "Then a kendo stick."

Ace Andrews: "UTA has an excellent curriculum."

Bianca almost smiles.

Almost.

Then she pulls the Hardcore Championship from around her waist and holds it in front of herself.

Bianca Page: "I was wrong."

Ace's eyebrows rise slightly.

Even Katy looks surprised at how easily Bianca says it.

Bianca Page: "Don't make that face. I can admit when I'm wrong."

Ace Andrews: "I've just never personally witnessed it."

Bianca ignores him.

Bianca Page: "This isn't a consolation prize."

She raises the championship slightly.

Bianca Page: "Emily Hightower made me bleed for this."

A beat.

Bianca Page: "Good."

Her confidence returns fully.

Bianca Page: "Because now nobody gets to say Bianca Page was handed something. Nobody gets to say Ace talked me into something. Nobody gets to say the Platinum Society stole something."

Ace slowly turns his head toward her.

Ace Andrews: "Let's perhaps not make that last one a blanket organizational statement."

Bianca smirks.

Bianca Page: "Emily wanted me to understand what this championship meant."

She throws it over her shoulder.

Bianca Page: "Now I do."

Katy Winters: "And Sol Azteca?"

The smile disappears.

Ace looks toward Bianca.

Bianca takes a moment before answering.

Katy Winters: "Sol appeared on the stage immediately before you hit Swanky, Lavish Lifestyle and Pure Elegance. She never physically interfered, but Emily clearly became distracted by her presence."

Bianca Page: "Did Sol hit Emily?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca Page: "Did Sol hit me?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca Page: "Did Sol put Emily through a table?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca Page: "Did Sol hit Swanky?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca Page: "Lavish Lifestyle?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca Page: "Pure Elegance?"

Katy Winters: "No."

Bianca pats the championship.

Bianca Page: "Then Sol Azteca can explain Sol Azteca whenever Sol Azteca feels like explaining Sol Azteca."

She looks directly into the camera.

Bianca Page: "I'm explaining this."

She raises the Hardcore Championship.

Bianca Page: "I survived Emily Hightower."

A beat.

Bianca Page: "I finished Emily Hightower."

Bianca Page: "And I am the UTA Hardcore Champion."

Ace applauds slowly.

Ace Andrews: "Which brings tonight's Platinum Society championship accounting to..."

He holds up one finger.

Ace Andrews: "One acquisition."

Then he raises a second finger.

Ace Andrews: "One defense pending."

Bianca looks toward him.

Bianca Page: "Samuel."

Ace Andrews: "Samuel."

Katy picks up on the shift.

Katy Winters: "Samuel Scythe defends the Fighting Championship against Savior Hawkins later tonight, but Scythe was involved in a fairly violent backstage fight with the Hightower family following your match."

Ace's pleasant expression flattens.

Ace Andrews: "Yes."

Katy Winters: "Are you concerned?"

Ace Andrews: "About Savior Hawkins?"

Katy Winters: "About Samuel."

Ace glances off camera.

Ace Andrews: "Unfortunately, those are currently the same concern."

Bianca laughs.

Ace adjusts his jacket.

Ace Andrews: "If you'll excuse me, I have a Fighting Champion to locate before he decides to warm up for his title defense by fighting the Los Angeles Police Department."

Bianca Page: "If he does, tell him to stretch first."

Ace Andrews: "Thank you, Bianca."

Bianca Page: "I'm a champion now. I give advice."

Ace walks out of frame.

Katy turns back toward Bianca.

Katy Winters: "So what's next for the new Hardcore Champion?"

Bianca doesn't hesitate.

Bianca Page: "What's next?"

She looks down at the championship.

Then back at Katy.

Bianca Page: "I enjoy this one."

A smile.

Bianca Page: "Then I go get another."

Bianca walks away with the Hardcore Championship over her shoulder.

Katy watches her leave.

The camera lingers for just a moment before fading into the Ring King logo.

Sixteen Became Two

Segment

The Ring King logo fills the screen.

The gold crown slowly rotates against black.

Then it fractures into sixteen individual pieces.

Sixteen faces flash across the screen.

Chris Ross.

Samuel Scythe.

Bobby Dean.

Mikey Unlikely.

Emily Hightower.

Hakuryu.

Then the ten who fought their way through qualifying.

One by one, the images disappear.

Sixteen become eight.

Eight become four.

Four become two.

The screen splits.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

Footage rolls from the opening round.

Chris Ross sprawled outside the ring following Madman Szalinski's attack.

Mikey inside, confused by what has happened.

The referee counting.

Mikey's hand being raised.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely didn't ask for the circumstances."

The image cuts.

Samuel Scythe bearing down on Mikey.

Mikey surviving.

Escaping.

Adjusting.

Then suddenly folding Scythe into the inside cradle.

ONE.

TWO.

THREE.

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't have to control the entire match."

Mikey rolls away as Scythe realizes what happened.

Mark Bravo: "He only has to control three seconds."

The footage changes.

Sol Azteca.

Mikey Unlikely.

The semifinal.

Sol pressing him.

Mikey forced to continually change his approach.

The rapid final exchange.

Sol's enziguri misses.

She catches herself.

For half a heartbeat, her back is exposed.

Mikey sees it.

He takes it.

The stack.

Sol fighting.

Mikey adjusting his grip again and again.

ONE.

TWO.

THREE.

Sol escapes immediately afterward.

Too late.

Mikey raises three fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "She was right."

Three fingers remain raised.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's all I needed."

Sol Azteca: "You found them."

Mikey Unlikely: "Barely."

A beat.

Mikey Unlikely: "Don't forget that part."

Black.

A single word appears.

THREE.

Then it disappears.

Mike Best fills the screen.

Valkyrie Knox falls.

Then Bobby Dean.

Bobby fights with a seriousness few expected.

Mike absorbs it.

Survives it.

Then—

I KNEED A HERO!

Bobby falls.

Mike covers.

Three.

Mike helps Bobby to his feet afterward.

Mike Best: "Don't lose that again."

The image changes.

Marie Van Claudio.

Mike trapped in the Sharpshooter.

Marie wrenching backward.

Mike refusing to submit.

Mike escaping.

The German suplex.

Hashtag Muted.

Then—

I KNEED A HERO!

Three.

Another cut.

Kirsty McKinney dragging Mike into her world.

Rides.

Cradles.

Transitions.

The Shear Cradle nearly ending everything.

The Pitty Choke tightening.

Mike fading.

Then surviving.

Kirsty avoiding I KNEED A HERO! once.

Again.

Again.

Until Mike finally creates the opening.

I KNEED A HERO!

Three.

Black.

A single word appears.

RESULTS.

The screen splits again.

Mikey on the left.

Mike on the right.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely has spent this tournament finding a way."

Footage of Mikey surviving Scythe.

Finding Sol's opening.

John Phillips: "Different opponents. Different matches. Different problems."

Mikey smiles as his hand is raised.

John Phillips: "Same three seconds."

Mike Best appears.

Bobby.

Marie.

Kirsty.

Each falling.

Mark Bravo: "Mike Best doesn't care how you remember the tournament."

I KNEED A HERO! flashes across the screen again.

Mark Bravo: "He cares what the bracket says."

The complete Ring King bracket appears.

Sixteen names.

Fourteen eliminated.

Two remain illuminated.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

The footage returns to Council Bluffs.

Mikey stands on the stage with the WrestleZone Championship over his shoulder.

Mike stands in the ring.

No talking.

No pointing.

No threat.

They simply stare at one another.

A voice speaks over the image.

Narrator: "One needs three seconds."

Mikey.

Narrator: "One needs results."

Mike.

The crown appears between them.

Narrator: "Tonight, one gets both."

The Ring King graphic fills the screen.

2026 RING KING TOURNAMENT FINAL

MIKEY UNLIKELY

VS.

MIKE BEST

TONIGHT.

One Acquisition. One Defense.

Segment

The camera follows Ace Andrews down a backstage corridor.

He's moving with purpose.

Not running.

Ace Andrews does not run.

But he's walking about as quickly as dignity permits.

He rounds a corner and pushes through a locker room door.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel."

Samuel Scythe sits on a bench.

The UTA Fighting Championship rests beside him.

Scythe is still wearing evidence of his earlier encounter with the Hightowers. His hair is disheveled. His gear isn't quite as pristine as it was when he arrived. The small line of blood at his mouth has mostly dried.

He is wrapping one wrist.

Slowly.

Methodically.

Scythe doesn't look up.

Samuel Scythe: "Ace."

Ace closes the door.

Ace Andrews: "How do you feel?"

Samuel Scythe: "Good."

Ace Andrews: "That's not an answer."

Scythe pulls the tape tighter.

Samuel Scythe: "Very good."

Ace stares at him.

Scythe finally looks up.

There's that smile again.

Ace Andrews: "That's worse."

Scythe tears the tape with his teeth.

Samuel Scythe: "Bianca win?"

Ace's demeanor immediately brightens.

Ace Andrews: "Bianca Page is your new UTA Hardcore Champion."

Scythe nods.

Samuel Scythe: "Good."

Ace Andrews: "Which means the Platinum Society entered Los Angeles with one championship and currently possesses two."

Ace points toward the Fighting Championship.

Ace Andrews: "I would like that number to remain two."

Scythe looks at the title.

Samuel Scythe: "It will."

Ace Andrews: "Wonderful. Love the confidence. Here's the part where I become annoying."

Samuel Scythe: "Become?"

Ace pauses.

Ace Andrews: "I liked you better before you learned jokes."

Scythe stands.

Ace looks him over.

Ace Andrews: "Anything hurt?"

Samuel Scythe: "Everything."

Ace's expression changes.

Scythe rolls his shoulders.

Samuel Scythe: "Normal."

Ace Andrews: "Samuel, you have a championship match."

Samuel Scythe: "I remember."

Ace Andrews: "Against Savior Hawkins."

Samuel Scythe: "I remember him too."

Ace Andrews: "Good. Because earlier tonight you apparently decided the best possible preparation for defending the Fighting Championship was getting into a fistfight with Buck Hightower."

Samuel Scythe: "He punched me."

Ace Andrews: "After you caught his sister."

Samuel Scythe: "She fell."

Ace Andrews: "And then Buck punched you."

Samuel Scythe: "Yes."

Ace Andrews: "And then you punched Buck."

Samuel Scythe: "Yes."

Ace Andrews: "And then David got involved."

Samuel Scythe: "Yes."

Ace Andrews: "And Dakota."

Samuel Scythe: "Yes."

Ace waits.

Scythe waits.

Ace Andrews: "Anything you'd like to add?"

Samuel Scythe: "They started it."

Ace closes his eyes.

Ace Andrews: "You're twenty-six years old."

Scythe's smile grows.

Ace Andrews: "No. Absolutely not. We're not doing this twice."

Ace points toward him.

Ace Andrews: "Here's what we're doing instead. You're going to walk out there. You're going to defend the Fighting Championship. You're going to walk back here with the Fighting Championship."

Scythe reaches down and picks up the title.

Ace Andrews: "And for the duration of that process, you are not going to fight any Hightowers."

Scythe places the championship over his shoulder.

Ace Andrews: "You are not going to fight anybody backstage."

Scythe steps toward the door.

Ace Andrews: "You are not going to fight security."

Scythe reaches the door.

Ace Andrews: "You are not going to fight a cameraman."

Scythe stops.

He looks at the camera.

The camera very subtly backs away.

Scythe looks back at Ace.

Samuel Scythe: "Wasn't planning to."

Ace Andrews: "Excellent. Progress."

Scythe opens the door.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel."

Scythe stops again.

Ace's tone changes.

The humor disappears.

Ace Andrews: "Savior Hawkins isn't Buck Hightower."

Scythe turns.

Ace Andrews: "He's not an interruption. He's not something that happened at ringside. He came here tonight specifically for that."

Ace points to the Fighting Championship.

Ace Andrews: "And Fighting Rules means nobody is coming to save you if this goes wrong."

Scythe looks down at the championship.

Then back at Ace.

Samuel Scythe: "Good."

Ace studies him.

Samuel Scythe: "I don't want anyone to save me."

Scythe wipes a thumb across the dried blood at the corner of his mouth.

Looks at it.

Then looks back at Ace.

Samuel Scythe: "I was cold before."

Ace's eyes narrow.

Ace Andrews: "Before what?"

Samuel Scythe: "Buck."

A beat.

Samuel Scythe: "I'm warm now."

Scythe walks through the doorway.

Ace remains behind.

He watches him leave.

Ace Andrews: "Of course you are."

Ace exhales and follows.

The camera lingers on the empty locker room for a moment before cutting back toward the arena.

Samuel Scythe vs. Savior Hawkins

Match

The camera returns to Crypto.com Arena.

The UTA Fighting Championship graphic fills the screen.

UTA FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP RULES

SAVIOR HAWKINS vs. SAMUEL SCYTHER (c)

John Phillips: "And now we move to a championship governed by a completely different set of rules."

Mark Bravo: "And if you're new to this, pay attention, because this isn't a normal wrestling match."

The graphic changes.

NO PINFALLS.

VICTORY BY SUBMISSION, COUNTOUT OR REFEREE STOPPAGE ONLY.

ONE ROPE BREAK PER COMPETITOR.

John Phillips: "You cannot win by pinfall. It does not matter if you keep your opponent's shoulders down for three seconds, thirty seconds or three minutes. There is no pinfall victory."

Mark Bravo: "Make him quit. Beat him until the referee decides he's had enough. Or make sure he can't answer the count."

John Phillips: "And perhaps most importantly, each competitor is allowed exactly one rope break."

Mark Bravo: "That's the part that changes everything. In a normal match, the ropes are always there. Tonight they're an emergency exit with one use."

John Phillips: "Once you've spent it, grabbing the ropes will not force another break."

Mark Bravo: "So don't spend it cheap."

The arena falls into darkness.

White orbs begin moving through the black.

Gold streaks shimmer from the rafters.

Deep navy light pulses through the arena as the ethereal guitar introduction of "Healing Pool" by Safest Ledge begins to build.

The crowd immediately recognizes it.

John Phillips: "Twenty-one-year-old Savior Hawkins. The Archangel. And this may be the most important match of his UTA career."

Mark Bravo: "He's good, John. Really good. Don't let what Samuel Scythe does to people make you forget who is walking through that curtain."

The drums kick harder.

White and gold pyrotechnics explode across the stage.

Savior Hawkins bursts through the curtain.

He sprints toward the edge of the stage, throwing his arms upward and pulling the Los Angeles crowd with him.

Savior plants his feet.

Draws back the invisible bow.

Savior Hawkins: "SHOWTIME!"

The crowd screams it with him.

Crowd: "SHOWTIME!"

Another blast of white and gold sparks frames Hawkins.

Then he's moving again.

Fast.

Down the ramp.

Past the ring.

Hawkins takes a full lap around ringside, slapping hands and jumping briefly onto the barricade to reach fans in the rows behind it.

John Phillips: "This connection with the audience isn't an act for Savior Hawkins. He feeds off it."

Mark Bravo: "Which can help him. It can also get him killed."

John Phillips: "That's dramatic."

Mark Bravo: "Have you met Samuel?"

Hawkins rounds the final corner.

He accelerates.

Slides underneath the bottom rope.

Pops immediately to his feet.

He scales the nearest turnbuckle.

The white and gold lights flash behind him as Hawkins slowly draws back the arrow once more.

The crowd responds.

Hawkins hops down.

And everything changes.

The smile disappears.

The showmanship disappears.

He retreats into his corner.

His feet begin bouncing lightly against the canvas.

Hands raised.

Boxing-style movement.

Eyes locked on the entrance.

John Phillips: "And there it is. That's the Hawkins people sometimes miss. Once the entrance is finished, so is the performance."

Mark Bravo: "He's not here to have a moment. He's here to become Fighting Champion."

The lights go completely black.

The energy changes instantly.

The cheering becomes an uneasy rumble.

Silence.

Then the titantron flickers.

A scythe passes across a field.

Words appear.

REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

The opening riff of "Useless Sacrifice" by Death Decline tears through the arena.

A single spotlight illuminates the stage.

Samuel Scythe stands beneath it.

Hood over his head.

Face pointed toward the floor.

The UTA Fighting Championship strapped around his waist.

Ace Andrews stands several steps behind him.

John Phillips: "Samuel Scythe won that championship from Graham Keel in Argentina and has made himself increasingly comfortable in exactly this environment."

Mark Bravo: "Comfortable? He was in a three-on-one fight with the Hightowers earlier tonight and walked away smiling."

The camera closes in.

The dried blood remains visible near Scythe's mouth.

John Phillips: "Which has to be a factor."

Mark Bravo: "For Hawkins?"

John Phillips: "For Scythe."

Mark Bravo: "I'm not sure."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Ace asked him how he felt."

John Phillips: "He said everything hurt."

Mark Bravo: "Then he called it normal."

Scythe raises his head.

His eyes find the ring.

Find Savior Hawkins.

And Scythe starts walking.

No playing to the crowd.

No wasted movement.

Ace follows.

John Phillips: "Hawkins brings speed. Technical ability. Striking. Aerial offense. He can change styles in the middle of an exchange."

Mark Bravo: "And he'd better. Because if he gives Scythe the same problem twice, Scythe's going to solve it by putting him through the floor."

Scythe reaches the steps.

He climbs.

Steps through the ropes.

Hawkins doesn't stop bouncing.

Scythe removes the Fighting Championship.

Hands it over.

Then pulls back his hood.

Scythe draws his thumb across his throat.

Hawkins watches every movement.

Mark Bravo: "Two hundred pounds for Hawkins. Two-fifty for Scythe. And Scythe wrestles like all fifty of those extra pounds are attached to a wrecking ball."

The referee brings both men toward the center.

The Fighting Championship is held between them.

Scythe looks at Hawkins.

Hawkins looks back.

No smile.

The referee explains the rules directly to both men.

No pinfalls.

Submission.

Countout.

Referee stoppage.

One rope break each.

The referee raises one finger toward Hawkins.

Then one toward Scythe.

Both acknowledge it.

John Phillips: "One escape. That's all either man gets."

Ace shouts from outside.

Ace Andrews: "Make him spend his."

Hawkins glances toward Ace.

Only for a moment.

Scythe doesn't.

His eyes never leave Hawkins.

The referee raises the Fighting Championship.

The crowd responds.

The title is carried from the ring.

Scythe backs into his corner.

Hawkins returns to his.

The bell rings.

Hawkins immediately starts moving.

Scythe doesn't.

John Phillips: "And look at the difference."

Hawkins circles.

Light on his feet.

Changing direction.

Scythe stands almost perfectly still.

Tracking him.

Mark Bravo: "Hawkins wants information. Scythe wants contact."

Hawkins darts forward.

Scythe swings.

Hawkins is already gone.

He circles behind.

Low kick to the thigh.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins moves again.

Another low kick.

Scythe steps forward.

Hawkins changes direction.

Flying forearm!

Scythe takes it.

Hawkins lands and immediately retreats.

John Phillips: "Smart beginning from Hawkins."

Mark Bravo: "Don't stand where Scythe expects you to be."

Hawkins comes in again.

Scythe reaches.

Hawkins ducks underneath.

Waistlock.

Scythe plants his feet.

Hawkins tries to move him.

Nothing.

Scythe looks down at the hands around his waist.

Hawkins immediately releases.

Too late.

Scythe catches his wrist.

Hawkins' eyes widen.

Scythe pulls.

Hawkins comes flying toward him—

EUROPEAN UPPERCUT!

Hawkins hits the canvas.

Mark Bravo: "Contact."

Scythe walks toward him.

Hawkins rolls away.

Gets up.

Scythe closes.

Hawkins throws a forearm.

Scythe takes it.

Another.

Scythe keeps coming.

A third.

Scythe's head snaps slightly.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

Scythe turns—

FLYING FOREARM!

Scythe staggers.

Hawkins pops up.

Another flying forearm!

Scythe backs into the ropes.

The crowd rises.

John Phillips: "Hawkins is finding the rhythm!"

Hawkins charges.

Third flying forearm!

Scythe comes off the ropes—

Hawkins drives the knee upward!

DIVINE BLITZ!

Scythe drops onto one knee.

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "Scythe is down!"

Hawkins turns toward the ropes out of instinct.

He stops himself.

Mark Bravo: "And here's the first adjustment. There's no cover."

Hawkins looks down at Scythe.

Immediately recalculates.

He steps behind him.

Hooks the head.

Scythe realizes what Hawkins wants.

He grabs Hawkins' wrist.

Hawkins tries to transition.

Scythe rises.

Still holding the wrist.

Hawkins throws a kick.

Scythe catches it.

Hawkins jumps—

ENZIGURI!

Scythe releases him.

Hawkins lands.

Scythe stumbles sideways.

Hawkins charges again.

Scythe turns.

RUNNING SHOULDER BLOCK!

Hawkins is nearly turned inside out.

Mark Bravo: "And there's the other adjustment."

John Phillips: "Hawkins was building momentum and Scythe erased it with one shot."

Scythe grabs Hawkins by the back of the neck.

Pulls him upright.

Hawkins fires a shot into the ribs.

Another.

Scythe clubs him across the back.

Hawkins drops to his knees.

Scythe pulls him up again.

EXPLODER SUPLEX!

Hawkins crashes across the canvas.

Scythe sits up immediately.

No cover.

He knows exactly what match he's in.

John Phillips: "That's something Savior has to understand. Scythe isn't adapting to Fighting Rules tonight."

Mark Bravo: "This is his championship. Everybody else adapts to him."

Scythe gets up.

Hawkins is already trying to do the same.

Scythe grabs him.

Hawkins catches the arm.

Wristlock.

Transition.

Hammerlock.

Scythe reaches backward.

Hawkins changes position before he can be caught.

He sweeps the leg.

Scythe drops to one knee.

Hawkins immediately loops an arm around Scythe's neck.

Scythe powers upward.

Hawkins changes again.

Front facelock.

Scythe reaches for the waist.

Hawkins spins behind.

John Phillips: "This is where Hawkins can frustrate him. He's not committing to one hold long enough for Scythe to simply power out."

Hawkins hooks Scythe's arm.

Scythe pulls.

Hawkins uses the momentum.

He rolls Scythe forward.

Scythe lands on his back.

Hawkins follows.

Instinctively, the referee starts to drop for a count—

Then stops.

Hawkins doesn't even try to hold the shoulders.

He grabs the leg instead.

Scythe kicks him away.

Hawkins rolls backward to his feet.

Scythe rises.

The crowd applauds the exchange.

Scythe stares at Hawkins.

Hawkins' chest rises and falls.

But there's the smallest smile.

Not arrogance.

Recognition.

He can wrestle with him.

Scythe notices the smile.

His own mouth curls upward.

Mark Bravo: "Don't smile."

John Phillips: "Why?"

Mark Bravo: "Because Scythe smiled back."

Scythe charges.

Hawkins moves.

Scythe hits the turnbuckles.

Hawkins attacks from behind.

Forearm.

Forearm.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins jumps onto the middle rope.

SPRINGBOARD—

Scythe catches him!

Hawkins' body stops in midair.

John Phillips: "Caught!"

Scythe adjusts him.

SCYTHE SLAM!

Running powerslam!

Hawkins bounces off the canvas.

Scythe stays on his knees beside him.

He could cover.

It would mean nothing.

Instead, Scythe reaches down.

His hand closes around Hawkins' throat.

Hawkins' eyes widen.

John Phillips: "TOUCH OF DEATH!"

Mark Bravo: "Already?!"

Scythe's fingers dig into the pressure point.

Hawkins' entire body stiffens.

The referee immediately drops beside him.

John Phillips: "Tongan Death Grip! Hawkins has to get out, submit, or use that rope break!"

Hawkins grabs Scythe's wrist with both hands.

He pulls.

Nothing.

Scythe pushes him flat against the canvas.

Hawkins kicks his legs.

The ropes are close.

Very close.

Ace sees it.

Ace Andrews: "Make him spend it!"

Hawkins reaches toward the bottom rope.

His fingers hover inches away.

John Phillips: "Remember, Savior gets one."

Mark Bravo: "And if he takes it now, it's gone."

Hawkins reaches.

Stops.

His hand curls into a fist.

He refuses the rope.

John Phillips: "Hawkins isn't using it!"

Scythe presses harder.

Hawkins' face twists.

His free hand hits the canvas.

Once.

Not a tap.

He plants it.

Pushes his shoulder upward.

Turns his body.

Scythe follows.

Hawkins twists again.

He gets onto his side.

Scythe tries to flatten him.

Hawkins hooks Scythe's wrist.

Shifts his hips.

Then suddenly throws both legs upward around the arm.

Scythe's grip breaks!

The crowd erupts.

Hawkins rolls away clutching his throat.

John Phillips: "HE ESCAPED WITHOUT USING THE ROPE!"

Mark Bravo: "That's huge."

Ace slaps the apron in frustration.

Scythe looks down at his hand.

Then at Hawkins.

Hawkins crawls toward the corner.

He pulls himself up.

One hand still against his throat.

Scythe approaches.

Hawkins turns.

Scythe swings.

Hawkins ducks.

SLINGSHOT SUPERKICK!

Scythe staggers backward.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

Flying forearm!

Scythe stumbles.

Hawkins hits the opposite ropes.

Second forearm!

Scythe backs toward the corner.

The crowd rises with Hawkins.

He looks around Crypto.com Arena.

The focus remains in his eyes.

But the building is feeding him now.

Hawkins charges.

KNEE STRIKE!

Scythe drops onto both knees.

John Phillips: "Hawkins has him hurt!"

Hawkins immediately moves behind Scythe.

He threads the leg.

Reaches across the face.

Scythe realizes it.

Mark Bravo: "Sinner's Prayer!"

Hawkins pulls.

Scythe fights the hands.

Hawkins shifts his weight.

Locks the hold!

John Phillips: "SINNER'S PRAYER IS IN!"

Scythe's body tenses.

Hawkins wrenches backward.

The STF-Camel Clutch hybrid bends Scythe's neck and spine.

Scythe reaches.

The ropes are several feet away.

Ace's expression changes completely.

John Phillips: "Samuel Scythe is trapped!"

Mark Bravo: "And Savior Hawkins just turned Fighting Rules against the Fighting Champion!"

Scythe plants his forearms.

He tries to pull himself forward.

Hawkins drags backward.

Scythe stops.

Hawkins pulls harder.

The referee asks Scythe if he submits.

Scythe's answer is immediate.

Samuel Scythe: "NO."

Hawkins adjusts.

More torque.

Scythe's face twists.

He reaches forward.

Still too far.

John Phillips: "Scythe has the same decision Hawkins just had!"

Mark Bravo: "Except Hawkins escaped."

Scythe crawls.

Hawkins fights him.

Another inch.

Another.

Scythe reaches.

His fingers touch the bottom rope.

He hesitates.

Ace says nothing now.

Scythe looks at the rope.

Then reaches around, trying to pry Hawkins loose instead.

Hawkins tightens the Sinner's Prayer.

Scythe's arm drops.

The referee moves closer.

John Phillips: "Scythe may not have a choice!"

Scythe's hand shoots forward.

He grabs the bottom rope.

The referee immediately calls for the break.

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "THERE IT IS!"

Hawkins releases immediately.

He rolls backward.

Scythe remains facedown against the ropes.

The referee raises one finger toward Scythe.

Then makes a cutting motion.

John Phillips: "Samuel Scythe has used his rope break!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not a little victory for Savior Hawkins. That's enormous."

Hawkins gets to his feet.

His throat is red from Touch of Death.

His breathing is rough.

But his rope break remains available.

Scythe slowly pushes himself up.

He turns.

Looks at Hawkins.

Ace watches from outside.

For the first time tonight, nobody in Platinum Society is smiling.

John Phillips: "Hawkins escaped Scythe's submission without spending his rope break."

Mark Bravo: "Then he forced Scythe to spend his."

Hawkins raises one finger.

Not taunting.

Just acknowledging the situation.

One rope break remains.

His.

Scythe looks at the finger.

Then at Hawkins.

Scythe wipes the dried blood from his mouth.

Looks at it on his thumb.

And smiles.

Mark Bravo: "Savior Hawkins has done everything right."

Scythe steps away from the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "Now comes the bad part."

John Phillips: "What's the bad part?"

Scythe begins walking toward Hawkins.

Mark Bravo: "He made Samuel Scythe interested."

Hawkins doesn't retreat.

That might be the most important thing about him right now.

Samuel Scythe advances.

Savior Hawkins stays exactly where he is.

John Phillips: "Hawkins has the advantage within the rules. His rope break is intact. Scythe's is gone."

Mark Bravo: "Then Hawkins better turn that advantage into a championship before Scythe turns him into a crime scene."

Scythe closes the distance.

Hawkins fires first.

Forearm.

Scythe answers.

Hawkins rocks backward.

He comes right back.

Another forearm.

Scythe responds with a European uppercut.

Hawkins staggers.

Scythe grabs him—

Hawkins slips free!

Kick to the thigh.

Kick to the ribs.

Scythe reaches.

Hawkins ducks.

He spins around behind him.

Dropkick to the back!

Scythe crashes chest-first into the turnbuckles.

Hawkins backs away.

Charges.

Running knee into Scythe's back!

Scythe gets crushed against the corner.

Hawkins pulls him out.

Hooks the head.

Scythe blocks.

Hawkins changes position.

Scythe throws an elbow backward.

Hawkins ducks it.

SUPERKICK!

Scythe falls against the ropes.

John Phillips: "Hawkins isn't letting Scythe establish himself!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the right idea. Don't wrestle the monster. Make the monster chase you."

Hawkins grabs Scythe's wrist.

Whip—

Scythe reverses.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

Scythe swings.

Hawkins ducks underneath.

He rebounds from the opposite side.

Scythe turns—

Hawkins leaps!

Scythe catches him around the waist!

John Phillips: "Again!"

Hawkins immediately throws elbows downward.

One.

Two.

Three.

Scythe's grip loosens.

Hawkins drops behind him.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins jumps—

Scythe catches him by the throat!

Hawkins kicks frantically at Scythe's body.

Scythe throws him backward!

Hawkins lands hard but rolls through.

He's back up.

REAPER'S BLADE!

The spear folds Hawkins in half.

The air leaves the building with him.

Mark Bravo: "There."

John Phillips: "REAPER'S BLADE! Hawkins got cut in half!"

Scythe remains on his knees.

Hawkins curls around his ribs.

Ace slowly smiles.

Ace Andrews: "Now."

Scythe stands.

He doesn't attempt Touch of Death.

Not yet.

Instead he grabs Hawkins by the head.

Pulls him upright.

Hawkins can barely stand.

Scythe drives a knee into his stomach.

Hawkins folds.

Another knee.

Hawkins drops.

Scythe pulls him back up.

John Phillips: "This is where the match changes. Hawkins spent the opening portion refusing to let Scythe dictate the pace."

Mark Bravo: "One spear bought Scythe the pace."

Scythe scoops Hawkins up.

He holds him.

Hawkins hangs vertically.

The seconds pass.

Five.

Six.

Seven.

Scythe walks toward the center of the ring.

Eight.

Nine.

Then throws Hawkins forward!

SOWING THE FIELDS!

Hawkins crashes face-and-chest first into the canvas.

John Phillips: "And there is no reason for Scythe to hurry now."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly. That's what people misunderstand about Fighting Rules. You don't need to find three seconds. You need to find the end."

Hawkins pushes onto his hands.

Scythe kicks him in the ribs.

Hawkins rolls over.

The referee warns Scythe.

Scythe looks at the referee.

Then back at Hawkins.

He grabs Hawkins by the wrist.

Pulls him upright.

Hawkins suddenly fires a forearm.

Scythe absorbs it.

Another.

Scythe's head turns.

Hawkins throws a third.

A fourth.

Scythe releases the wrist.

Hawkins kicks him in the stomach.

Scythe bends.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

Scythe catches him coming back—

SPINEBUSTER!

Hawkins hits with brutal force.

Scythe rises immediately.

Mark Bravo: "That's the problem."

John Phillips: "Hawkins keeps finding little openings."

Mark Bravo: "Little openings don't stop a bulldozer."

Scythe grabs Hawkins.

He pulls him toward the ropes.

Hawkins suddenly grabs the top rope.

The referee looks closely.

Hawkins realizes what he's doing and immediately lets go.

John Phillips: "Careful!"

Mark Bravo: "That doesn't count unless he's using it to break a hold, but that's instinct taking over. Savior has spent his entire career knowing the ropes mean safety."

Scythe clubs Hawkins across the back.

Hawkins drops through the ropes and lands on the floor.

The referee immediately begins the count.

John Phillips: "And don't forget countout victories count tonight."

Scythe stays inside.

Hawkins lies beside the barricade.

Referee: "ONE!"

Ace walks nearby.

He doesn't touch Hawkins.

He doesn't need to.

Ace Andrews: "Stay down."

Referee: "TWO!"

Hawkins rolls onto his stomach.

Ace Andrews: "Nobody will think less of you."

Referee: "THREE!"

Hawkins pushes himself up.

Ace smiles.

Ace Andrews: "Well."

Referee: "FOUR!"

Ace Andrews: "Samuel might."

Hawkins looks toward him.

Ace takes a step backward.

Hands raised innocently.

Referee: "FIVE!"

Hawkins gets one foot underneath himself.

Referee: "SIX!"

Scythe waits in the middle of the ring.

John Phillips: "Scythe could go after him."

Mark Bravo: "Why? Hawkins has to come back to him."

Referee: "SEVEN!"

Hawkins reaches the apron.

Referee: "EIGHT!"

Hawkins pulls himself up.

Referee: "NINE!"

Hawkins dives underneath the bottom rope!

The count stops.

The crowd roars.

Hawkins lies flat on his stomach.

Scythe looks down at him.

Mark Bravo: "Congratulations."

John Phillips: "He beat the count."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah. And his prize is Samuel Scythe."

Scythe reaches down.

Hawkins suddenly grabs his arm!

He rolls through!

Scythe gets pulled down!

Hawkins transitions!

SINNER'S PRAYER!

The crowd explodes!

John Phillips: "AGAIN! AGAIN!"

Scythe immediately begins fighting the grip.

Hawkins gets the leg trapped.

He reaches across Scythe's face.

Scythe stretches his arm toward the ropes—

And the referee immediately shakes his head.

John Phillips: "THE ROPES CAN'T SAVE HIM!"

Scythe's hand reaches the bottom rope.

He grabs it.

Nothing happens.

The referee points at Scythe.

Then holds up one finger.

Used.

Gone.

Hawkins pulls harder.

Mark Bravo: "This is exactly why Hawkins forcing that rope break mattered!"

Scythe releases the rope.

Now he has to escape.

Hawkins arches backward.

Scythe grimaces.

Ace moves closer to the apron.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel!"

Scythe plants both hands.

He pushes.

Hawkins pulls.

Scythe pushes again.

His arms tremble.

John Phillips: "Hawkins has already made Scythe use the rope once. If he makes him submit now, Savior Hawkins leaves Los Angeles as Fighting Champion!"

Scythe gets one knee underneath himself.

Hawkins immediately shifts his weight.

Scythe drops back down.

The crowd gets louder.

Savior Hawkins: "ASK HIM!"

The referee does.

Scythe shakes his head.

Hawkins pulls again.

Scythe's face contorts.

His hand rises.

For just a moment—

It hangs above the canvas.

John Phillips: "LOOK AT HIS HAND!"

Ace's eyes widen.

Scythe's hand lowers—

But doesn't tap.

It plants.

Scythe pushes himself upward.

Hawkins' eyes widen.

Scythe gets onto both knees.

Hawkins is still attached to him.

Scythe rises.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, no."

Hawkins hangs from Scythe's back.

Still pulling.

Still fighting.

Scythe gets completely upright.

He backs toward the corner.

Hawkins tightens the hold.

Scythe charges backward.

CRASH!

Hawkins is crushed between Scythe and the turnbuckles.

He refuses to release.

Scythe does it again!

CRASH!

Hawkins' grip loosens.

Third time!

CRASH!

Hawkins finally falls away.

Both men collapse.

The crowd gives them a huge reaction.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins almost did it!"

Mark Bravo: "And don't rewrite that because Scythe escaped. Hawkins had the Fighting Champion in real trouble."

Scythe rolls onto his back.

Hawkins lies against the bottom turnbuckle.

Both breathe heavily.

The referee checks Hawkins.

Hawkins waves him away.

The referee checks Scythe.

Scythe pushes the official's hand aside.

Ace watches from ringside.

His expression is no longer smug.

It's analytical.

Ace Andrews: "Enough."

Scythe hears him.

His eyes shift toward Ace.

Ace Andrews: "Harvest."

Scythe sits up.

Hawkins uses the ropes to pull himself upright.

He turns.

Scythe charges.

REAPER'S BLADE—

HAWKINS LEAPFROGS!

Scythe stops himself before hitting the corner.

He turns.

SUPERKICK!

Scythe staggers.

Hawkins fires another!

Scythe drops to one knee.

The crowd is back with Savior.

Hawkins looks toward the turnbuckles.

John Phillips: "Hawkins sees something!"

He climbs.

Scythe is still down.

Hawkins reaches the top.

He steadies himself.

Scythe rises.

Hawkins launches!

Scythe moves!

Hawkins adjusts in midair and rolls through the landing.

He pops back up.

Scythe grabs him.

Hawkins twists free.

Kick to the stomach.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

DIVINE BLITZ!

Scythe staggers backward.

Hawkins hits the ropes again.

Flying forearm!

Scythe remains standing.

Again!

Scythe wobbles.

Hawkins backs into the ropes.

He explodes forward—

REAPER'S BLADE!

Scythe catches him in the middle of the ring.

Hawkins folds around the spear.

John Phillips: "GOOD GOD!"

Mark Bravo: "He ran straight into it!"

Hawkins doesn't move.

The referee immediately drops beside him.

Scythe gets onto his knees.

The referee checks Hawkins.

Hawkins blinks.

He responds.

Barely.

The referee allows it to continue.

John Phillips: "That was close to a stoppage right there."

Mark Bravo: "And that's another thing Savior has to worry about. You don't have to quit if the referee decides you can't protect yourself."

Scythe stands over Hawkins.

Hawkins rolls onto his side.

Scythe pulls him up.

Hawkins can barely support his own weight.

Scythe hooks him.

Lifts.

ELYSIAN GIFT!

The Jackhammer drives Hawkins into the canvas.

The referee checks him again.

Scythe could step away.

Could let the referee decide.

He doesn't.

He reaches down.

John Phillips: "Scythe isn't finished."

Mark Bravo: "Of course he isn't."

Scythe pulls Hawkins upright.

Hawkins suddenly fires a forearm.

Weak.

But it lands.

Scythe stops.

Hawkins throws another.

Scythe's head barely moves.

Another.

Hawkins stumbles backward after throwing it.

But he raises his hands again.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins is still fighting."

Mark Bravo: "That's why he's here."

Scythe walks toward him.

Hawkins swings.
Scythe blocks.
European uppercut!
Hawkins falls against the ropes.
Scythe charges.
Hawkins drops!
Scythe spills through the ropes!
He lands on the floor.
Hawkins collapses inside.
The referee starts counting Scythe.
John Phillips: "WAIT A MINUTE!"
Mark Bravo: "Countout counts!"
Referee: "ONE!"
Scythe sits up.
Referee: "TWO!"
Ace immediately moves toward him.
Ace Andrews: "Up."
Referee: "THREE!"
Scythe gets onto one knee.
Hawkins realizes what's happening.
He crawls toward the ropes.
Referee: "FOUR!"
Scythe stands.
Referee: "FIVE!"
Hawkins pulls himself up.
He sees Scythe.
Sees the count.
Scythe approaches the apron.
Referee: "SIX!"
Hawkins hits the opposite ropes.
John Phillips: "What's Hawkins doing?!"
He accelerates.
Referee: "SEVEN!"

Hawkins dives through the ropes!

SUICIDE DIVE!

He crashes into Scythe!

Both men go down!

The crowd explodes.

Mark Bravo: "HE RESET THE COUNT!"

John Phillips: "He could've stayed inside!"

Mark Bravo: "He didn't come here to have Samuel Scythe accidentally lose track of a number! He came here to beat him!"

The referee restarts the count with both men outside.

Referee: "ONE!"

Hawkins rolls away from Scythe.

He uses the barricade to stand.

Referee: "TWO!"

Scythe pushes himself up.

Hawkins charges.

Scythe catches him.

Hawkins elbows free.

Referee: "THREE!"

Hawkins jumps onto the barricade.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins launches!

Flying forearm!

Both men crash again.

Referee: "FOUR!"

Hawkins gets up first.

He grabs Scythe.

Tries to send him toward the ring.

Scythe reverses.

Hawkins crashes back-first into the apron.

Referee: "FIVE!"

Scythe grabs Hawkins.

Hawkins kicks him.

Referee: "SIX!"

Another kick.

Scythe releases him.

Hawkins slides underneath the bottom rope.

Referee: "SEVEN!"

Scythe climbs onto the apron.

Hawkins gets up.

Referee: "EIGHT!"

Hawkins charges.

Scythe steps through the ropes just before Hawkins reaches him.

The count ends.

Hawkins throws a forearm.

Scythe throws one back.

Hawkins.

Scythe.

Hawkins.

Scythe.

The crowd reacts to every shot.

John Phillips: "Hawkins is standing in the middle of the ring trading with Samuel Scythe!"

Mark Bravo: "And this is where bravery starts becoming a bad decision."

Hawkins lands another.

Scythe answers.

Hawkins staggers.

Comes back.

Another.

Scythe's lip opens again.

Fresh blood.

Scythe touches it.

Looks at his fingers.

Hawkins fires again.

Scythe catches the arm.

Hawkins tries to pull free.

Scythe yanks him inward.

EUROPEAN UPPERCUT!

Hawkins' legs buckle.

Scythe doesn't let him fall.

He pulls Hawkins back upright.

Another uppercut.

Hawkins drops to one knee.

Scythe grabs his throat.

John Phillips: "TOUCH OF DEATH!"

Hawkins reacts instantly.

Both hands on Scythe's wrist.

Scythe forces him onto his back.

Hawkins kicks.

Twists.

Fights.

His free hand reaches toward the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "Now Savior has his."

Hawkins reaches.

His fingertips touch the bottom rope.

He grabs it.

The referee immediately orders Scythe to release.

Scythe does.

The referee raises one finger toward Hawkins.

Then cuts it away.

John Phillips: "That's it."

Mark Bravo: "Now they're equal."

John Phillips: "No rope breaks remaining for either man."

Hawkins stays near the ropes.

Breathing heavily.

Scythe stands over him.

Ace smiles again.

Ace Andrews: "Nowhere left to go."

Hawkins looks toward Ace.

Then toward Scythe.

Slowly...

Hawkins pulls himself back to his feet.

He raises his fists.

Scythe tilts his head.

Hawkins waves him forward.

Savior Hawkins: "Come on."

The crowd rises.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins has survived the Reaper's Blade. He's survived Elysian Gift. He's escaped Touch of Death once and spent his only rope break surviving it a second time."

Mark Bravo: "And he's made Scythe use his only rope break. He's put the champion in Sinner's Prayer twice. He's drawn blood."

Scythe takes one step forward.

Hawkins stays ready.

Mark Bravo: "Savior Hawkins has absolutely proven he belongs in this fight."

Another step.

Hawkins doesn't move.

Mark Bravo: "But proving you belong in Samuel Scythe's world..."

Scythe's mouth curls into that awful smile again.

Mark Bravo: "...and surviving it are two completely different things."

Hawkins keeps his fists raised.

Scythe keeps coming.

Neither man has a rope break left.

There are no more emergency exits.

Hawkins throws the first shot.

Forearm.

Scythe absorbs it.

Hawkins throws another.

Scythe's head turns.

A third.

A fourth.

Hawkins changes levels.

Kick to the thigh.

Another.

Scythe reaches for him.

Hawkins slips outside the grasp.

Kick to the ribs.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins snaps another kick into the thigh.

John Phillips: "Hawkins is going back to what worked at the beginning. Hit, move, change the angle."

Mark Bravo: "Because the minute Scythe gets two hands on him, the conversation changes."

Hawkins darts in.

Forearm.

Scythe swings.

Hawkins ducks.

Hawkins hits the ropes.

Flying forearm!

Scythe staggers.

Hawkins pops back up.

He sees it.

Scythe is hurt.

Hawkins hits the ropes again.

Another flying forearm!

Scythe falls backward into the corner.

The crowd comes alive.

John Phillips: "Scythe is rocked!"

Hawkins charges.

Scythe throws an elbow.

Hawkins ducks beneath it.

He springs onto the middle rope.

Turns—

Kick to the side of Scythe's head!

Scythe drops to a knee.

Hawkins lands.

Looks at him.

Looks toward the crowd.

Then immediately stops himself.

No celebration.

No wasted second.

Hawkins grabs Scythe.

John Phillips: "That's maturity. Earlier in his career maybe Hawkins takes the moment there."

Mark Bravo: "Tonight he takes the neck."

Hawkins threads the leg.

Scythe realizes what's happening.

He throws himself forward.

Hawkins follows him down.

He reaches across the face—

John Phillips: "SINNER'S PRAYER!"

Scythe catches Hawkins' hands before they can lock!

Hawkins pulls.

Scythe fights.

Hawkins changes his grip.

Scythe rolls.

Hawkins rolls with him!

They tumble toward the ropes.

Scythe's boot hits the bottom rope.

The referee does nothing.

Mark Bravo: "Doesn't matter anymore!"

Hawkins nearly gets the hands locked.

Scythe reaches backward.

He catches Hawkins by the head.

Hawkins keeps fighting for the hold.

Scythe pulls.

Hawkins' body slides forward.

Scythe gets a knee underneath himself.

Then another.

Hawkins jumps onto his back!

He reaches again!

Scythe stands with Hawkins hanging from him.

John Phillips: "Hawkins will not let this go!"

Scythe reaches behind himself.

Gets an arm around Hawkins.

And throws him over his shoulder!

Hawkins crashes onto the canvas.

He rolls through the impact.

Scythe turns.

Hawkins is already coming back.

SUPERKICK!

Scythe staggers.

Hawkins spins—

SECOND SUPERKICK!

Scythe drops to both knees.

The crowd erupts.

Hawkins backs toward the ropes.

Scythe's head hangs.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins may be one sequence away!"

Hawkins charges.

DIVINE BLITZ!

The knee catches Scythe flush.

Scythe collapses.

Hawkins falls beside him.

Both men are down.

The crowd rises.

The referee immediately checks Scythe.

Scythe responds.

Hawkins pushes himself onto his elbows.

John Phillips: "There's no pinfall! Hawkins can't cover him!"

Mark Bravo: "And that's where this championship changes your instincts. In any other match, Savior Hawkins hooks the leg right now."

Hawkins crawls toward Scythe.

The referee asks Scythe if he can continue.

Scythe shoves the referee's hand away.

Hawkins grabs him.

Tries to turn him over.

Scythe throws a forearm from underneath.

It catches Hawkins across the jaw.

Hawkins rocks backward.

Scythe rolls onto his knees.

Hawkins grabs him again.

Scythe drives his forehead into Hawkins' face.

Hawkins stumbles.

Scythe rises.

Hawkins kicks him in the stomach.

Scythe bends.

Hawkins hooks him.

Scythe blocks.

Hawkins tries again.

Scythe powers upward.

Hawkins is lifted completely off the canvas!

Scythe holds him.

Hawkins kicks his legs.

Scythe throws him forward!

SOWING THE FIELDS!

Hawkins crashes face-first.

Scythe drops to one knee.

Even he needs a moment now.

John Phillips: "Hawkins has made the champion work for every inch of this."

Mark Bravo: "Absolutely. But there's something ugly happening now."

John Phillips: "What?"

Mark Bravo: "Look at Savior."

Hawkins pushes onto his hands.

His arms shake.

He gets one knee underneath himself.

Falls.

Tries again.

Mark Bravo: "Everything Hawkins does is costing more than it did ten minutes ago."

Scythe rises.

Mark Bravo: "Samuel Scythe is making him pay interest."

Scythe grabs Hawkins around the waist.

Hawkins immediately throws elbows.

One connects.

Another.

A third.

Scythe releases.

Hawkins runs toward the ropes.

He jumps onto the middle rope.

Springboards backward—

Scythe catches him.

Again.

This time Hawkins doesn't have the immediate escape.

SCYTHE SLAM!

Hawkins bounces off the mat.

Scythe stays on him.

He grabs Hawkins by the throat.

John Phillips: "TOUCH OF DEATH!"

Hawkins grabs the wrist.

Both hands.

He kicks toward the ropes.

His boot finds the bottom one.

The referee does nothing.

Hawkins looks toward him.

The referee shakes his head.

John Phillips: "No rope break!"

Mark Bravo: "Savior spent it. He knew this moment could come."

Hawkins twists.

He tries the same escape he used earlier.

Scythe recognizes it.

He shifts his weight.

Hawkins tries to throw the legs upward around Scythe's arm.

Scythe drives a knee into Hawkins' ribs.

The escape dies immediately.

Mark Bravo: "Not twice."

Scythe presses harder.
Hawkins' legs kick against the canvas.
The referee asks him.
Hawkins shakes his head.
Savior Hawkins: "NO!"
The crowd begins clapping.
Hawkins grabs Scythe's wrist.
Pulls.
His arms shake.
Scythe doesn't move.
Hawkins changes direction.
He gets onto his side.
Scythe forces him back down.
Hawkins throws a forearm into Scythe's face.
Scythe's grip loosens.
Another forearm.
Another.
Scythe releases!
Hawkins rolls away.
The building erupts.
John Phillips: "HE GOT OUT AGAIN!"
Mark Bravo: "Savior Hawkins refuses to die!"
Hawkins reaches the ropes.
Uses them to stand.
Scythe comes toward him.
Hawkins turns.
SUPERKICK!
Scythe staggers.
Hawkins throws another.
Scythe catches the foot.
Hawkins jumps.
ENZIGURI!
Scythe releases.

Hawkins gets up.
He hits the ropes.
Scythe swings.
Hawkins ducks.
He rebounds.
Flying forearm!
Scythe falls backward into the ropes.
Hawkins doesn't stop.
He hits the opposite ropes.
Scythe rebounds toward him.
DIVINE BLITZ—
SCYTHE CATCHES THE KNEE!
Hawkins hops on one foot.
He swings with the free leg.
Scythe ducks.
Scythe pulls Hawkins inward.
SPINEBUSTER!
Hawkins is planted.
Scythe stays over him.
Breathing heavily.
Fresh blood still at his lip.
The crowd is loud.
Scythe looks toward Ace.
Ace doesn't say anything.
He doesn't need to.
Scythe looks back down.
Hawkins rolls onto his stomach.
He starts pushing himself up again.
John Phillips: "How many times can Hawkins do this?"
Mark Bravo: "That's what we're finding out."
Hawkins gets onto one knee.
Scythe watches.
Hawkins gets to his feet.

Scythe could attack.

He doesn't.

He lets Savior stand.

Hawkins raises his hands.

Scythe steps forward.

Hawkins throws a forearm.

Scythe absorbs it.

Another.

Scythe absorbs it.

A third.

Scythe answers with one European uppercut.

Hawkins nearly falls.

He catches himself.

Comes back.

Forearm.

Scythe answers.

Hawkins staggers.

Hawkins comes back again.

Scythe answers again.

Hawkins drops to one knee.

The crowd starts chanting.

Crowd: "SAV-IOR!"

Crowd: "SAV-IOR!"

Crowd: "SAV-IOR!"

Hawkins looks around.

He hears them.

He pushes himself back up.

Scythe waits.

Hawkins fires another forearm.

Scythe's head turns.

Hawkins fires again.

Again.

Again.

Scythe stumbles backward.
The crowd gets louder.
Hawkins roars.
He hits the ropes.
DIVINE BLITZ!
Scythe drops!
Hawkins collapses beside him.
John Phillips: "HE GOT HIM!"
The referee checks Scythe.
Hawkins looks toward the referee.
Scythe responds.
Still conscious.
Still fighting.
Hawkins pounds the canvas once.
He forces himself up.
He looks toward the corner.
Then toward Scythe.
Mark Bravo: "Savior needs to finish this now."
Hawkins climbs.
Slowly.
Every movement hurts.
He reaches the second rope.
Then the top.
Scythe remains down.
Hawkins rises.
The crowd stands with him.
Scythe begins to move.
Hawkins waits.
Scythe reaches his feet.
Hawkins launches.
Scythe turns—
Hawkins catches him!
Both men crash down!

Hawkins rolls through!

He immediately goes for the leg!

John Phillips: "SINNER'S PRAYER!"

Scythe kicks.

Hawkins holds on.

Scythe rolls.

Hawkins follows.

He threads the leg!

Scythe claws at Hawkins' hands.

Hawkins reaches across the face.

Almost there.

John Phillips: "HE'S GOT THE LEG! HE JUST NEEDS THE HANDS!"

Scythe reaches toward the ropes.

His fingers touch them.

Nothing.

Mark Bravo: "No salvation there!"

Hawkins gets his hands together!

SINNER'S PRAYER!

The crowd explodes.

Scythe's eyes widen.

Hawkins pulls backward with everything he has left.

John Phillips: "HE'S GOT IT! SAVIOR HAWKINS HAS SINNER'S PRAYER LOCKED IN FOR THE THIRD TIME!"

Ace moves toward the ring.

Stops himself.

There is nothing he can do.

Scythe reaches for the ropes.

Nothing.

He reaches backward for Hawkins.

Can't reach him.

Hawkins pulls harder.

The referee asks Scythe.

Scythe shakes his head.

Hawkins screams as he wrenches back.

Savior Hawkins: "GIVE UP!"

Scythe's hand rises.

The crowd gets louder.

His hand hovers.

John Phillips: "SCYTHER'S HAND!"

Hawkins pulls.

Scythe's hand shakes.

Then closes into a fist.

He plants it against the canvas.

Scythe begins dragging himself forward.

Hawkins screams and pulls backward.

Scythe moves anyway.

One inch.

Another.

Not toward the ropes.

Toward the corner.

Mark Bravo: "He's not looking for a break."

Scythe gets a knee underneath himself.

Hawkins shifts his weight.

Scythe drops.

Hawkins pulls again.

Scythe plants both hands.

Pushes.

One knee.

Then the other.

John Phillips: "How is he doing this?!"

Scythe rises.

Hawkins stays attached.

Scythe gets completely upright.

Hawkins' eyes widen.

Scythe turns.

Not toward the corner.

Toward the center.

He reaches backward.
Gets both hands around Hawkins.
And pulls.
Hawkins refuses to release.
Scythe pulls harder.
Hawkins' grip finally breaks.
Scythe yanks Hawkins over his shoulder—
AND THROWS HIM DOWN!
Hawkins crashes onto his back.
Scythe stumbles.
Nearly falls.
Hawkins rolls over.
He's exhausted.
Scythe looks at him.
Then something changes.
The smile is gone.
The enjoyment is gone.
Scythe charges.
REAPER'S BLADE!
Hawkins folds around the spear.
John Phillips: "REAPER'S BLADE!"
Scythe gets up.
Hawkins barely moves.
The referee starts toward him.
Scythe grabs Hawkins first.
Pulls him upright.
Mark Bravo: "Samuel could let the referee look at him."
John Phillips: "He doesn't want the referee."
Scythe lifts Hawkins.
Holds him.
ELYSIAN GIFT!
Hawkins is driven into the canvas.
The referee immediately drops beside Hawkins.

Scythe kneels next to him.

The referee checks Savior.

Hawkins responds.

Barely.

The referee asks if he can continue.

Hawkins nods.

John Phillips: "Savior says yes."

Mark Bravo: "Of course he does."

Scythe hears it.

He reaches down.

His hand closes around Hawkins' throat.

John Phillips: "TOUCH OF DEATH."

Scythe locks it in.

Hawkins' body jolts.

His hand immediately reaches toward the ropes.

He finds them.

Grabs them.

Nothing.

The referee shakes his head.

Hawkins knows.

He lets go.

He grabs Scythe's wrist instead.

Pulls.

Nothing.

Hawkins throws a forearm from the mat.

It barely reaches Scythe.

Another.

Weaker.

Scythe presses down.

Hawkins' legs kick.

John Phillips: "Hawkins has escaped this twice."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't have the same body he had the first two times."

Hawkins tries to turn.

Scythe follows.

Hawkins tries to get his legs around the arm.

Scythe sees it coming.

He shifts away.

Hawkins reaches for Scythe's wrist again.

His grip slips.

The referee is right beside him.

Referee: "Savior! Talk to me!"

Hawkins shakes his head.

Savior Hawkins: "No."

Scythe tightens the hold.

Hawkins' hand rises.

He could tap.

He doesn't.

His hand falls to the canvas.

The referee grabs it.

Raises it.

Lets go.

It falls.

John Phillips: "One."

The referee raises Hawkins' arm again.

Lets go.

It falls.

John Phillips: "Two."

Ace watches silently.

The crowd is on its feet.

The referee lifts Hawkins' arm for the third time.

Lets go.

The hand falls—

AND STOPS.

Hawkins' fingers curl.

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "HE'S STILL THERE!"

Hawkins' arm shakes violently.

He grabs Scythe's wrist.

Scythe's eyes narrow.

Hawkins pulls.

His body turns an inch.

Another.

Scythe leans forward.

More pressure.

Hawkins stops moving.

The referee speaks to him.

No response.

The referee grabs Hawkins' arm again.

Lifts it.

Releases.

It falls.

The referee immediately waves the match off.

The bell rings.

John Phillips: "THAT'S IT!"

Scythe keeps the hold for half a second longer.

The referee grabs his arm.

Ace shouts from outside.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel!"

Scythe releases.

He sits beside Hawkins.

Breathing hard.

The referee checks Savior immediately.

The announcer's voice fills the arena.

Ring Announcer: "Ladies and gentlemen, the referee has stopped this contest! Therefore, your winner... AND STILL UTA FIGHTING CHAMPION... SAMUEL... SCYTHER!"

"Useless Sacrifice" begins again.

The crowd responds with a mixture of boos and applause for what they've just witnessed.

Ace enters the ring carrying the Fighting Championship.

He walks toward Scythe.

Scythe gets to his feet.

Ace looks him over.

The blood at the mouth.

The sweat.

The punishment.

Then Ace holds out the Fighting Championship.

Scythe takes it.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins didn't submit."

Mark Bravo: "No."

John Phillips: "He forced Samuel Scythe to use his only rope break. He had Sinner's Prayer locked in three separate times. He survived Reaper's Blade. Elysian Gift. Touch of Death."

Mark Bravo: "Until he didn't."

Scythe raises the Fighting Championship.

Mark Bravo: "That's Fighting Rules."

The referee continues checking Hawkins.

Hawkins begins to stir.

The crowd cheers when they see it.

Scythe hears them.

He looks down.

Hawkins rolls onto his side.

Then onto his hands and knees.

The referee tells him to stay down.

Hawkins doesn't listen.

He gets one foot underneath himself.

Scythe watches.

Ace says something quietly to Scythe.

Scythe doesn't respond.

Hawkins gets to his feet with help from the referee.

The crowd applauds him.

Hawkins looks across the ring.

At Scythe.

Scythe looks back.

No handshake.

No embrace.

No sudden friendship.

Hawkins looks at the Fighting Championship.

Then at Scythe.

He gives the smallest nod.

Scythe stares at him for another moment.

Then lifts the championship onto his shoulder.

He turns away.

John Phillips: "Savior Hawkins came here to take Samuel Scythe's championship. He didn't."

Scythe steps through the ropes.

Ace follows.

John Phillips: "But he forced the Fighting Champion deeper into his own rulebook than perhaps anyone expected."

Mark Bravo: "And that's worth remembering. Savior Hawkins was good tonight. Damn good."

Scythe reaches the floor.

He stops.

Looks back into the ring.

Hawkins is still standing.

Barely.

But standing.

Mark Bravo: "But this is Scythe's domain."

Scythe raises the Fighting Championship.

Mark Bravo: "You don't beat Samuel Scythe here by proving you're tough."

Scythe turns toward the ramp.

Mark Bravo: "Everybody who signs up for Fighting Rules is tough."

Ace walks beside him.

Mark Bravo: "You have to survive longer than the Reaper."

Scythe and Ace begin walking toward the stage.

John Phillips: "Samuel Scythe retains the UTA Fighting Championship by referee stoppage."

The camera gets one final shot of Savior Hawkins inside the ring.

Then cuts to Scythe.

The Fighting Championship over his shoulder.

Blood still visible at the corner of his mouth.

Scythe looks directly into the camera.

Samuel Scythe: "You reap what you sow."

He turns away.

Two Championships

Segment

The camera catches Ace Andrews and Samuel Scythe returning through the curtain.

Scythe looks like a man who has already been through two fights tonight because, effectively, he has.

The dried blood at his mouth has been replaced by fresh blood. His chest rises heavily. Sweat pours from his hair.

But the UTA Fighting Championship is still over his shoulder.

Ace walks beside him looking considerably happier than he did at several points during that defense.

Waiting backstage is Bianca Page.

The new UTA Hardcore Championship rests around her waist.

Bianca looks at Scythe.

Scythe looks at Bianca.

For a moment, neither says anything.

Then Bianca raises her championship slightly.

Scythe raises his.

Bianca Page: "Nice."

Samuel Scythe: "You too."

Ace steps between them.

He looks at Bianca's championship.

Then Scythe's.

His smile grows.

Ace Andrews: "Two acquisitions."

Bianca immediately looks at him.

Bianca Page: "One acquisition. One retention."

Ace considers the correction.

Ace Andrews: "Two championships."

Bianca Page: "Better."

Ace straightens his jacket.

Ace Andrews: "Emily Hightower arrived with two championships."

He gestures toward Bianca.

Ace Andrews: "Now she has one."

Then toward Scythe.

Ace Andrews: "Savior Hawkins came here to take ours."

Scythe adjusts the Fighting Championship.

Ace Andrews: "He didn't."

Bianca looks Scythe over.

Bianca Page: "You look terrible."

Samuel Scythe: "You went through a table."

Bianca Page: "And I look fantastic."

Scythe considers this.

Samuel Scythe: "You do."

Bianca smiles.

Ace Andrews: "Wonderful. Everybody's supportive. Everybody's a champion. Nobody else fights a Hightower tonight."

Scythe looks toward him.

Ace raises one finger.

Ace Andrews: "That last one was specifically for you."

Scythe says nothing.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel."

Samuel Scythe: "They started it."

Ace stares at him.

Bianca starts laughing.

Ace Andrews: "We're leaving."

Ace turns and starts down the hallway.

Bianca follows.

Scythe remains for a moment.

Two championships fill the shot.

The Hardcore Championship.

The Fighting Championship.

Scythe finally follows.

Platinum Society disappears down the corridor.

You Wanted Me

Segment

The screen goes black.

A quiet scratching sound breaks the silence.

Metal against concrete.

Then—

Madman Szalinski appears.

A Revolutionary War-style musket clutched in his hands.

He's creeping through a hallway with all the subtlety of a man who has never once understood the definition of subtlety.

Madman Szalinski: "Be vewy, vewy quiet..."

Cut.

Madman searching for the Reaper of Harrisburg.

Madman Szalinski: "Where are you... you teleporting freak of professional wrestling?"

Cut.

A door.

A handwritten sign.

REAPER.

Madman kicks it open.

Madman Szalinski: "WHERE ARE YOU?!"

The music underneath the package is almost playful.

Then—

The musket fires.

The screen flashes white.

Madman Szalinski: "SORRY!"

Another cut.

Madman Szalinski: "UNPLANNED SPOT!"

Chris Ross laughs.

Not a smirk.

Not a sarcastic chuckle.

The UTA Champion genuinely laughs at the insanity unfolding around him.

The footage changes.

Madman charges.

Ross goes down.

Madman scrambles away.

Madman Szalinski: "Anytime, anywhere... The Madness can strike too!"

Madman points.

Madman Szalinski: "Tag! You're it, champ!"

Ross watches him disappear.

Still amused.

The music changes.

The humor begins draining away.

Chris Ross sits waiting inside Madman's car.

Madman opens the door.

Freezes.

Ross looks at him.

Cut.

Ross and Madman face-to-face.

Chris Ross: "You don't get to decide when."

Another image.

Chris Ross: "You don't get to decide where."

Another.

Chris Ross: "And you damn sure don't get to decide how."

Ross steps closer.

Chris Ross: "Anytime. Any place. Anywhere."

A beat.

Chris Ross: "The Reaper can strike."

Madman smiles.

The footage accelerates.

Madman stalking Ross.

Ross stalking Madman.

The musket.

The car.

The hallway.

Madman's laughter.

Ross' laughter.

Then neither man is laughing.

Madman stands across from the UTA Champion.

The soundtrack drops lower.

Chris Ross: "You wanted this."

Black.

Chris Ross: "Your shot."

Madman's face.

Chris Ross: "But more than anything..."

Ross' face.

Chris Ross: "...you wanted me."

Cut to Ross watching footage of Madman's antics eight days ago.

He laughs.

For a moment.

Then Ross turns the television off.

Silence.

The room changes with him.

Chris Ross: "You thought if you kept poking me..."

Images of Madman's provocations.

Chris Ross: "...eventually I'd get angry."

Ross staring directly into the camera.

Chris Ross: "And angry men make mistakes."

Black.

Chris Ross: "You didn't make me angry."

A heartbeat.

Chris Ross: "You made me interested."

The music stops.

Madman Szalinski.

Chris Ross.

Face-to-face.

Chris Ross: "At Ring King, I don't give a fuck about three seconds."

Ross attacks.

Madman attacks.

Rapid cuts now.

Fists.

Concrete.

The UTA Championship.

Madman's crazed eyes.

Ross' cold stare.

Chris Ross: "I don't care if I pin you."

Impact.

Chris Ross: "I don't care if you pin me."

Impact.

Chris Ross: "Because a three count doesn't mean shit to me."

Black.

A distant ambulance siren begins.

Chris Ross: "What matters..."

The rear doors of an ambulance appear.

Chris Ross: "...is which one of us walks out on his own two feet."

The doors begin closing.

Chris Ross: "And which one goes home in a fucking ambulance."

SLAM.

The ambulance doors close.

Black.

Then Ross' voice one final time.

Chris Ross: "You wanted your shot."

A beat.

Chris Ross: "You got it."

The Ring King logo slowly emerges.

Chris Ross: "Now survive it."

UTA CHAMPIONSHIP

CHRIS ROSS (c) vs. MADMAN SZALINSKI

TONIGHT

Full Attention

Segment

FULL ATTENTION

The package fades away.

We cut backstage.

Bobby Dean stands beside Melissa Cartwright.

The UTA International Championship rests over Bobby's shoulder.

There's no food.

No wandering attention.

No grin for the camera.

Bobby's eyes are fixed ahead.

Melissa Cartwright: "Bobby, we're moments away from your International Championship defense against Eric Dane Junior."

Bobby nods.

Melissa Cartwright: "Eight days ago, you said Eric believes the joke is that Bobby Dean is the International Champion."

Another nod.

Melissa Cartwright: "Later that same night..."

Melissa pauses.

Melissa Cartwright: "...Eric Dane Junior pinned you."

Bobby looks at her.

Bobby Dean: "Yep."

Melissa waits.

Bobby waits.

Melissa Cartwright: "That's it?"

Bobby Dean: "What do you want me to say?"

Bobby adjusts the championship.

Bobby Dean: "You want me to tell you the referee counted fast?"

He shakes his head.

Bobby Dean: "He didn't."

Bobby Dean: "You want me to say I wasn't ready?"

Another shake.

Bobby Dean: "I was."

Bobby Dean: "You want me to blame Hakuryu? Yoshii? Sinja? The moon? Mercury being in Gatorade?"

Melissa almost reacts to that last one.

Bobby doesn't.

Bobby Dean: "Eric Dane Junior hit me with the SD3."

Beat.

Bobby Dean: "And he pinned me."

Bobby looks directly into the camera.

Bobby Dean: "One."

Bobby Dean: "Two."

Bobby Dean: "Three."

He shrugs.

Bobby Dean: "Clean."

Melissa Cartwright: "Does that change the way you look at him tonight?"

Bobby Dean: "Yeah."

No hesitation.

Bobby Dean: "It does."

Bobby looks down at the International Championship.

Bobby Dean: "Eight days ago I stood right here and said Eric thought this was funny."

He taps the faceplate.

Bobby Dean: "Bobby Dean."

Another tap.

Bobby Dean: "International Champion."

Bobby looks back at Melissa.

Bobby Dean: "Then he beat me."

A beat.

Bobby Dean: "So maybe the joke isn't funny anymore."

Melissa Cartwright: "Are you worried that he can do it again?"

Bobby thinks about that.

Bobby Dean: "He can."

Melissa seems slightly surprised by the answer.

Bobby Dean: "That's what everybody wants champions to say, isn't it?"

Bobby looks into the camera again.

Bobby Dean: "Respect your opponent."

Bobby Dean: "Acknowledge the threat."

Bobby Dean: "Don't underestimate anybody."

Bobby nods.

Bobby Dean: "Okay."

Bobby Dean: "Eric is fast."

Bobby Dean: "Eric is athletic."

Bobby Dean: "Eric is fearless."

Bobby pauses.

Bobby Dean: "Or stupid."

There it is.

Just a little Bobby Dean.

Bobby Dean: "Jury's still out."

Melissa smiles slightly.

Bobby doesn't.

Bobby Dean: "But he's dangerous."

Bobby Dean: "And eight days ago, he proved it."

He shifts the championship off his shoulder.

Holds it in both hands.

Looks at it.

Bobby Dean: "You know what Mike Best taught me?"

Melissa doesn't interrupt.

Bobby Dean: "Sometimes somebody has to hit you hard enough that you stop believing your own bullshit."

Bobby looks up.

Bobby Dean: "Mike did."

He places the championship back over his shoulder.

Bobby Dean: "Eric did too."

Melissa Cartwright: "So what happens now?"

Bobby exhales.

Then finally, a small smile.

Not the usual one.

Bobby Dean: "Eric wanted me to take him seriously."

Bobby looks toward the direction of Gorilla.

Then back toward the camera.

Bobby Dean: "Congratulations, kid."

The smile disappears.

Bobby Dean: "Now you've got my full attention."

Bobby walks out of frame.

Melissa watches him leave.

The camera holds for only a moment.

Then we cut back toward the arena.

John Phillips: "Eight days ago Eric Dane Junior proved that he can pin Bobby Dean."

Mark Bravo: "And I think Eric got exactly what he wanted."

John Phillips: "A championship match?"

Mark Bravo: "No."

The UTA International Championship graphic fills the screen.

Mark Bravo: "Bobby's attention."

Bobby Dean vs. Eric Dane Jr.

Match

The International Championship graphic fades from the screen.

The lights inside Crypto.com Arena shift.

For the first time tonight, Eric Dane Junior isn't waiting for someone to notice him.

The entire building is waiting for him.

Eric emerges onto the stage with every ounce of confidence expected from a man who has spent weeks explaining to anyone willing—or unwilling—to listen that this is what a superstar looks like.

He stops at the top of the ramp.

Looks across the arena.

Slowly spreads his arms.

And grins.

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Junior has never lacked confidence."

Mark Bravo: "Confidence? John, this kid walks into rooms like he's surprised everybody else got invited."

John Phillips: "But tonight he has evidence."

Eric starts down the ramp.

John Phillips: "Eight nights ago, Eric Dane Junior pinned the International Champion cleanly in the center of the ring."

Mark Bravo: "SD3. One, two, three. Bobby Dean didn't complain about it then, and you just heard him refuse to complain about it now."

Eric reaches ringside.

He hops onto the apron and steps through the ropes.

Then immediately climbs the turnbuckles.

He looks around Crypto.com Arena.

Points toward himself.

The message requires no translation.

Eric hops down.

He turns toward the entrance.

And waits.

The reaction changes.

Bobby Dean emerges.

The UTA International Championship is around his waist.

No food.

No distraction.

No playing to the camera.

Bobby stops on the stage.

Eric beckons him forward from inside the ring.

Bobby looks at him.

Then down at the International Championship.

He pats the faceplate once.

And walks.

John Phillips: "There is something different about Bobby Dean tonight."

Mark Bravo: "There was something different about Bobby after Mike Best beat him. Eric didn't understand it at first."

John Phillips: "He understands now."

Mark Bravo: "He better."

Bobby reaches ringside.

Eric sits on the middle rope.

He pulls the top rope upward.

Holding them open for Bobby.

Big smile.

Bobby stops.

Looks at him.

Eric gestures politely.

Eric Dane Jr.: "After you, champ."

Bobby considers it.

Then walks around him and enters through the opposite side.

Eric looks mildly offended.

Mark Bravo: "Rude."

John Phillips: "Eric was mocking him."

Mark Bravo: "Still held the rope."

Bobby removes the International Championship.

For just a moment, he looks at it.

Then hands it to the referee.

Eric approaches.

The referee raises the championship between them.

Eric's eyes immediately go to the gold.

Bobby's eyes don't.

They're on Eric.

Eric notices.

His smile grows.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Full attention?"

Bobby nods.

Bobby Dean: "Yep."

The referee hands the championship outside.

Calls for the bell.

DING! DING! DING!

Eric immediately bounces on the balls of his feet.

Bobby stays planted.

Eric circles.

Bobby turns with him.

Eric feints forward.

Bobby doesn't bite.

Eric feints again.

Nothing.

Eric smiles.

They move toward one another.

Eric raises his hands.

Lockup—

Eric ducks underneath.

He comes up behind Bobby.

And pats him on the stomach.

The crowd reacts.

Eric immediately dances backward.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Full attention, right?"

Bobby looks down at his stomach.

Then back at Eric.

Bobby Dean: "Yep."

Eric laughs.

They approach again.

Eric reaches.

Bobby reaches with him.

Eric ducks away again.

This time he slaps Bobby lightly across the cheek.

Eric backs away.

Hands raised.

Smiling.

Bobby rubs his cheek.

John Phillips: "Eric is testing him."

Mark Bravo: "Eric is being Eric."

Third approach.

Eric ducks—

Bobby catches him.

Both arms around the waist.

Eric's eyes widen.

Bobby Dean: "Gotcha."

Bobby launches him.

Eric Dane Junior flies halfway across the ring.

He crashes onto the canvas and rolls all the way underneath the bottom rope.

The crowd explodes.

Eric lands on the floor.

He sits there.

Looks toward the ring.

Bobby looks down at him.

Bobby Dean: "Full attention."

Mark Bravo: "There it is."

Eric gets to his feet.

The smile is gone.

He slides back inside.

Bobby advances.

Eric immediately attacks the leg.

Kick.

Another.

Bobby reaches.

Eric slips away.

Kick to the opposite thigh.

Bobby turns.

Eric fires an elbow.

Another.

He hits the ropes.

Bobby swings.

Eric ducks.

Opposite ropes.

Eric comes back—

Flying knee!

Bobby staggers.

Eric lands.

Hits the ropes again.

Another knee!

Bobby backs into the ropes.

Eric charges.

Bobby tries to catch him.

Eric slides underneath.

Bobby turns.

Dropkick!

Bobby hits the ropes.

Eric pops back up.

Another dropkick!

Bobby finally falls through the ropes to the floor.

Eric sees him.

Then looks toward the opposite side.

John Phillips: "Eric's thinking about something."

Mark Bravo: "That's usually where the trouble starts."

Eric takes off.

Across the ring.

Back again.

He launches himself through the ropes!

Bobby looks up—

Eric crashes into him!

Both men slam into the barricade!

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "ERIC DANE JUNIOR JUST THREW HIMSELF AT THE CHAMPION!"

Mark Bravo: "That's what Bobby was talking about! Eric does things normal people don't think of because normal people have the part of the brain that says DON'T DO THAT!"

Eric gets up first.

He throws both arms outward.

There's the grin again.

Eric rolls Bobby underneath the bottom rope.

Then climbs onto the apron.

Bobby gets onto one knee.

Eric grabs the top rope.

Springboards—

Flying clothesline!

Bobby goes down.

Eric hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Bobby powers out.

Eric rolls through.

Immediately back to his feet.

Bobby sits up.

Eric drives a knee into his face.

Bobby falls backward.

Another cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Bobby kicks out.

Eric stays on him.

Forearm.

Forearm.

Elbow.

Eric gets up.

Hits the ropes.

Running knee!

Bobby rolls toward the corner.

John Phillips: "This is exactly what Bobby knew he was facing."

Mark Bravo: "Knowing the missile is coming doesn't make the missile slower."

Eric charges into the corner.

Bobby moves.

Eric jumps onto the middle turnbuckle instead.

Bobby turns.

Eric launches backward!

Crossbody!

Bobby catches him.

Eric's eyes widen.

Bobby holds him across his chest.

Eric starts throwing elbows.

One.

Two.

Three.

Bobby stumbles.

Eric slips behind him.

He pushes Bobby toward the ropes.

Bobby rebounds.

Eric jumps—

Bobby runs straight through him!

Eric flips backward from the collision.

John Phillips: "GOOD LORD!"

Bobby doesn't cover.

He grabs Eric.

Pulls him upright.

Whips him hard into the corner.

Eric hits chest-first.

Bobby follows.

All of Bobby Dean crashes into Eric Dane Junior.

Eric crumples.

Mark Bravo: "And that's the other side of this matchup."

Bobby pulls Eric up.

He puts him back into the corner.

Then leans into him.

Eric immediately starts pushing.

Bobby doesn't move.

John Phillips: "Look at the difference in size."

Mark Bravo: "More importantly, look at what Bobby's doing with it."

Bobby drives his shoulder into Eric's stomach.

Eric gasps.

Again.

Again.

Then Bobby simply presses his body weight into Eric.

The referee starts counting.

Bobby backs away at four.

Eric sucks in air.

Bobby grabs him.

Pulls him away from the corner.

Eric fires a forearm.

Bobby absorbs it.

Eric throws another.

Bobby grabs him.

Bearhug.

Eric immediately starts fighting.

Elbows down onto Bobby's head.

Bobby squeezes.

Eric grimaces.

John Phillips: "This isn't flashy."

Mark Bravo: "It's not supposed to be. Eric wants to go a hundred miles an hour. Bobby just turned the parking brake on."

Eric keeps throwing elbows.

Bobby squeezes again.

Eric's movement slows.

Bobby carries him toward the corner.

Drives him back-first into the turnbuckles.

Eric cries out.

Bobby doesn't release.

He pulls him away.
Drives him into the corner again.
Eric's legs kick.
Bobby finally releases.
Eric collapses to his knees.
Bobby looks down at him.
Bobby Dean: "Still fun?"
Eric looks up.
Breathing harder now.
He smiles anyway.
Eric Dane Jr.: "Kinda."
Bobby nods.
Bobby Dean: "Okay."
Bobby pulls him up.
Eric suddenly fires an elbow.
Bobby's head snaps sideways.
Eric throws another.
Another.
Bobby releases.
Eric hits the ropes.
Comes back—
Bobby catches him!
Eric kicks wildly.
Bobby turns.
And dumps him hard onto the canvas.
Eric bounces.
Bobby covers.
ONE!
TWO!
Eric kicks out.
Bobby immediately covers again.
ONE!
TWO!

Eric escapes again.

Bobby grabs him.

Pulls him back down.

Another cover.

ONE!

Eric kicks out.

John Phillips: "Bobby's making him work even on the kickouts."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly. Eric's greatest weapon is movement. Bobby's charging him for every bit of it."

Eric rolls toward the ropes.

Bobby grabs his ankle.

Eric turns onto his back.

Kicks Bobby in the face.

Bobby releases.

Eric gets up.

Bobby charges.

Eric pulls the top rope down!

Bobby tumbles over it.

Eric drops to his knees.

Breathing heavily.

He looks through the ropes.

Bobby is getting back up.

Eric looks toward the corner.

Then toward Bobby.

His eyes light up.

Mark Bravo: "No."

Eric runs.

He jumps onto the turnbuckles.

Then launches himself outward!

He twists through the air—

And crashes into Bobby Dean!

Both men disappear behind the barricade!

The arena erupts.

John Phillips: "WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!"

Mark Bravo: "EXACTLY!"

The referee checks both men.

Eric emerges first.

He uses the barricade to stand.

He's breathing heavily.

But smiling.

Eric Dane Jr.: "SUPERSTAR SHIT!"

The crowd responds loudly.

Mark Bravo: "See, that's the problem. It worked, so now he's going to think it was a good idea."

Eric drags Bobby toward the ring.

It takes considerably more effort than Eric expected.

He gets Bobby onto the apron.

Pushes.

Bobby barely moves.

Eric pushes again.

John Phillips: "And here's exactly what you were talking about."

Eric strains.

Finally gets Bobby underneath the bottom rope.

Eric slides inside after him.

He hooks both legs.

ONE!

TWO!

Bobby kicks out!

Eric sits up.

His chest heaves.

He looks toward the referee.

Two.

Eric nods.

Gets back up.

Bobby reaches his knees.

Eric fires a kick into his chest.

Another.

Another.

Bobby catches the next one.

Eric hops.

He jumps for an enziguri.

Bobby ducks.

Eric lands on his stomach.

Bobby falls onto him.

All of his weight.

Eric's eyes bulge.

Mark Bravo: "That's a wrestling move when Bobby does it."

John Phillips: "That's gravity."

Mark Bravo: "Gravity is undefeated."

Bobby rolls off.

Eric curls around his ribs.

Bobby gets up first.

He pulls Eric upright.

Eric tries another elbow.

Bobby blocks it.

Grabs him.

And throws him across the ring.

Eric lands hard.

Bobby walks after him.

Eric scrambles backward.

For the first time tonight, Eric Dane Junior isn't smiling.

John Phillips: "Eric wanted Bobby's full attention."

Bobby reaches down.

Eric kicks his hand away.

John Phillips: "He's got it."

Eric rolls to the apron.

Bobby follows.

Eric stands outside the ropes.

Bobby reaches for him.

Eric snaps Bobby's throat across the top rope!

Bobby staggers backward.

Eric grabs the rope.
Springboards.
Knee!
Bobby goes down!
Eric lands beside him.
Immediately covers.
ONE!
TWO!
Bobby gets the shoulder up!
Eric slaps the mat once.
He gets up.
Pulls Bobby with him.
Eric hooks him.
Bobby blocks.
Eric tries again.
Bobby's weight stays planted.
Eric changes direction.
Knee to the face!
Bobby stumbles.
Eric jumps.
Another knee!
Bobby falls backward into the corner.
Eric backs toward the opposite side.
He takes a breath.
Then charges.
Running knee!
Bobby's head snaps backward.
Eric immediately pulls him out.
He somehow gets Bobby down.
Hooks the leg.
ONE!
TWO!
TH—

Bobby kicks out!

Eric rolls backward onto his knees.

His eyes widen.

John Phillips: "That was close!"

Eric looks at Bobby.

Then slowly smiles.

Because he's beginning to see it.

That same opening.

Bobby is down.

Eric rises.

He looks toward the ropes.

The crowd begins reacting before he even moves.

John Phillips: "Wait."

Eric takes a step.

John Phillips: "Eric's looking for it."

Mark Bravo: "Bobby knows."

Eric hits the ropes.

He launches.

Shooting Star—

Bobby moves!

Eric adjusts!

He lands on his feet!

Turns—

Bobby is already there.

He catches Eric.

And SLAMS him into the canvas!

The building explodes.

Eric bounces and rolls onto his back.

Bobby falls against the ropes.

John Phillips: "BOBBY HAD IT SCOUTED!"

Mark Bravo: "Eight days ago Bobby didn't know what was coming!"

Bobby looks down at Eric.

Eric looks back up.

Mark Bravo: "Tonight he was waiting for it."

Bobby walks toward him.

Eric starts backing away.

Not because he's afraid.

Because he's thinking.

Bobby grabs him.

Eric throws an elbow.

Bobby absorbs it.

Eric throws another.

Bobby grabs him around the waist.

Eric's feet leave the ground.

Bobby drives him into the corner.

Eric gasps.

Bobby backs away.

Charges.

All of Bobby crashes into Eric again.

Eric collapses.

Bobby pulls him up.

Whips him across the ring.

Eric hits the opposite turnbuckles.

Bobby charges.

Eric moves!

Bobby hits the corner.

Eric rolls away.

He tries to sprint.

His legs don't quite cooperate.

Bobby catches him from behind.

Eric immediately starts fighting the hands.

Bobby pulls him backward.

Eric throws a desperate elbow.

It lands.

Bobby releases.

Eric turns.

SUPERKICK!

Bobby staggers.

Eric drops to one knee from the effort.

John Phillips: "Eric is slowing down."

Mark Bravo: "He's been flying around this ring, flying out of this ring, and every time Bobby gets hold of him he makes Eric carry two people's workload."

Eric forces himself up.

Bobby approaches.

Eric throws an elbow.

Bobby answers with one of his own.

Eric staggers.

Eric fires back.

Bobby answers.

Eric's legs buckle.

He catches himself.

Then grins.

Bobby looks at him.

Eric Dane Jr.: "That all you got?"

Bobby looks almost offended.

Bobby Dean: "No."

Bobby blasts him.

Eric drops.

Mark Bravo: "Why would you ask that?"

Bobby pulls Eric back up.

Eric is wobbling.

Bobby hooks him.

Eric realizes the danger.

He starts fighting.

Elbow.

Elbow.

Bobby maintains control.

Eric reaches for the ropes.

Bobby pulls him away.

Eric throws another elbow.

Bobby's grip finally breaks.
Eric stumbles forward.
Bobby comes after him.
Eric spins.
Elbow!
Bobby staggers.
Eric runs toward the ropes.
Springboards—
Bobby catches him!
Eric's legs kick.
Bobby adjusts his grip.
Eric hammers elbows downward.
Bobby's knees bend.
Eric keeps firing.
Bobby loses him.
Eric lands behind Bobby.
Bobby turns.
Eric leaps.
Knee!
Bobby drops to one knee.
Eric sees him.
He looks toward the corner.
Then toward Bobby.
Eric runs.
Up the turnbuckles.
He turns.
Bobby rises.
Eric launches—
Bobby catches him again!
But Eric immediately twists!
He drags Bobby forward!
Bobby's face hits the canvas!
Eric rolls through.

Bobby is down.

Eric hooks the leg!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

BOBBY KICKS OUT!

Eric falls backward.

He stares at the ceiling.

The crowd is roaring.

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Junior was a fraction away!"

Eric sits up.

He looks at Bobby.

Then toward the turnbuckles.

Something enters his mind.

Eric gets up.

He pulls Bobby toward the corner.

Mark Bravo: "What's he doing?"

Eric starts climbing.

He reaches down for Bobby.

Bobby resists.

Eric clubs him across the back.

Again.

He tries to drag Bobby upward.

John Phillips: "Eric is trying to get Bobby Dean onto those turnbuckles."

Mark Bravo: "That's a lot of Bobby Dean to put anywhere."

Eric keeps fighting.

He gets Bobby onto the first rope.

Then the second.

Eric climbs higher.

He reaches for Bobby's head.

The crowd realizes what might be coming.

John Phillips: "Wait a minute."

Eric hooks him.

John Phillips: "SD2!"

Bobby immediately starts fighting.

Mark Bravo: "That's his father's move!"

Eric tries to pull.

Bobby doesn't move.

Eric tries again.

Nothing.

Bobby drives a fist into Eric's ribs.

Eric holds on.

Another.

Eric's grip loosens.

Bobby grabs him.

Eric's eyes widen.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, kid."

Bobby throws Eric from the turnbuckles!

Eric flips backward and crashes into the ring!

Bobby remains on the second rope.

The entire arena realizes it at once.

Bobby looks down.

Eric lies beneath him.

John Phillips: "Bobby."

Mark Bravo: "No."

Bobby looks around Crypto.com Arena.

Mark Bravo: "Bobby, gravity has been very good to you tonight. Don't abuse the relationship."

Bobby jumps.

All of Bobby Dean comes crashing down!

Eric moves!

Bobby hits the canvas!

The ring shakes.

Eric crawls toward the ropes.

John Phillips: "Nobody home!"

Mark Bravo: "Gravity just filed for divorce."

Eric uses the ropes to stand.

Bobby rolls onto his back.

Eric sees him.

He looks toward the opposite ropes.

Then stops.

He remembers.

SD3.

Bobby waiting for it.

Eric shakes his head.

John Phillips: "Look at Eric."

Mark Bravo: "He's thinking."

John Phillips: "That's what Bobby forced him to do."

Eric walks toward Bobby instead.

He pulls the champion upright.

Bobby suddenly grabs him.

Eric immediately throws elbows.

Bobby drives him backward.

Eric hits the corner.

Bobby crushes him again.

Eric slumps.

Bobby pulls him out.

Hooks him.

Drives him down!

Bobby covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ERIC GETS A SHOULDER UP!

Bobby looks at the referee.

Two.

Bobby nods.

No complaint.

He pulls Eric up again.

Eric can barely stand.

Bobby grabs him.
Eric drops his weight.
Bobby pulls.
Eric suddenly slips free.
He gets behind Bobby.
Bobby turns.
Eric kicks him in the stomach.
Bobby bends.
Eric jumps.
Knee!
Bobby staggers backward.
Eric hits the ropes.
Bobby braces.
Eric stops short.
Bobby hesitates.
Eric smiles.
There.
That hesitation.
Eric attacks from the opposite side.
Elbow!
Bobby turns.
Eric jumps onto the middle rope.
Springboard knee!
Bobby falls against the opposite ropes.
Eric runs past him.
Bobby turns.
Eric jumps onto the ropes again.
Bobby's eyes track him.
Eric springs backward.
Bobby reaches to catch him—
Eric twists away before Bobby can secure him!
He lands behind Bobby.
Bobby turns quickly.

Eric isn't there.

He's already moving.

John Phillips: "Eric's changing the pattern!"

Eric hits the opposite ropes.

Bobby turns again.

Too late.

Eric launches.

Rotation.

Bobby reaches—

SD3!

THE SHOOTING STAR DDT SPIKES BOBBY DEAN!

Crypto.com Arena erupts.

John Phillips: "SD3! SD3!"

Eric rolls Bobby over.

Hooks both legs.

The referee drops.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings.

Eric doesn't move.

For one second, he's still holding Bobby's legs.

Like his body hasn't caught up with what just happened.

Then he releases.

He sits back.

Looks at the referee.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Three?"

The referee holds up three fingers.

Eric stares.

The announcement begins.

Ring Announcer: "Ladies and gentlemen, your winner..."

The referee retrieves the International Championship.

Ring Announcer: "...AND NEEEEEEEEEW UTA INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION..."

Eric gets to his knees.

Ring Announcer: "ERIC! DANE! JUNIOR!"

The referee hands him the championship.

Eric takes it.

And everything stops.

No pose.

No smart-ass comment.

No declaration about superstar shit.

Eric Dane Junior looks down at the International Championship.

Runs his hand across the faceplate.

Turns it slightly.

Looks at his own reflection in the gold.

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Junior has done it."

Mark Bravo: "Twice."

Eric looks up.

Mark Bravo: "That's what matters to me, John. Eight days ago, Bobby could've called it a bad night. Could've told himself he wasn't prepared."

Bobby Dean rolls onto his side.

Mark Bravo: "Tonight Bobby Dean prepared specifically for that move."

Replay appears.

Eric's first SD3 attempt.

Bobby moving.

Bobby waiting.

The counter.

Then the finish.

Eric changing directions.

Changing the entry.

Making Bobby track him from one side to the other.

SD3.

Three.

John Phillips: "Bobby solved the problem."

Mark Bravo: "Eric changed the problem."

Back live.

Bobby sits against the bottom turnbuckle.

Eric is still on his knees in the center of the ring.
International Championship in his hands.
Bobby looks at him.
Eric finally notices.
The two stare at one another.
Eric slowly gets to his feet.
Bobby pulls himself up using the ropes.
The referee moves between them.
Bobby gently puts a hand on the referee's shoulder.
Moves him aside.
Eric's expression changes.
The championship comes slightly closer to his body.
Ready.
Bobby approaches.
Eric watches every step.
Bobby stops in front of him.
Looks down at the International Championship.
Then at Eric.
Bobby reaches for the belt.
Eric pulls it back.
Eric Dane Jr.: "Uh-uh."
Bobby raises both hands.
Bobby Dean: "Relax."
Eric doesn't.
Bobby points at the championship.
Bobby Dean: "Lemme see it."
Eric looks suspicious.
Very suspicious.
Finally, he loosens his grip just enough.
Bobby takes the International Championship.
The crowd quiets.
Eric's jaw tightens.
Bobby looks at the championship.

Turns it around.

Then holds it out toward Eric.

Eric looks at him.

Bobby gives the belt back.

Eric slowly takes it.

Bobby looks him up and down.

The battered twenty-one-year-old.

The International Championship.

Bobby nods.

Bobby Dean: "Now you look like a superstar."

Eric freezes.

Bobby turns.

Steps through the ropes.

And leaves.

No handshake.

No hug.

No excuses.

Eric watches him walk up the ramp.

Then looks down at the championship again.

Something starts happening.

Slowly.

Very slowly.

The corner of Eric's mouth rises.

Then the other.

The grin gets bigger.

And bigger.

Until Eric Dane Junior looks like the single most insufferably satisfied human being in Los Angeles.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, God."

John Phillips: "What?"

Eric runs toward the corner.

He leaps onto the turnbuckles.

Raises the International Championship over his head.

Mark Bravo: "He was already like this without a championship."

Eric points toward himself with his free hand.

Eric Dane Jr.: "SUPERSTAR!"

He raises the championship again.

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Junior said he was coming to Los Angeles to take Bobby Dean's International Championship."

Eric jumps down.

Immediately climbs another corner.

John Phillips: "He told Bobby Dean to take him seriously."

Eric raises the title.

John Phillips: "Bobby did."

A replay shows SD3 one final time.

Then the three count.

Back live.

Eric holds the International Championship high above his head.

John Phillips: "And Eric Dane Junior beat him anyway."

Mark Bravo: "The worst thing that could've possibly happened."

John Phillips: "For Bobby?"

Mark Bravo: "For everybody."

Eric looks directly into the camera.

He points toward the International Championship.

Then toward himself.

Eric Dane Jr.: "TOLD YOU."

Eric raises the championship one more time.

The new UTA International Champion.

What is Left?

Segment

Backstage.

Marie Van Claudio stands in the center of The Empire's locker room.

She is alone.

At least for the moment.

There are enough chairs for considerably more people.

Marie looks toward the door.

It opens.

Amy Harrison enters first.

Valkyrie Knox follows behind her.

Marie watches them enter.

Neither woman says anything.

Marie looks past them.

The door closes.

Marie Van Claudio: "Where are they?"

Amy doesn't need clarification.

Amy Harrison: "Don't know."

Marie Van Claudio: "You didn't ask?"

Amy Harrison: "No."

Marie looks toward Valkyrie.

Marie Van Claudio: "And you?"

Valkyrie shakes her head.

Marie Van Claudio: "Unbelievable."

Marie turns away.

Marie Van Claudio: "We are at one of the biggest events of the year. The entire company is here. Everyone is watching."

She turns back.

Marie Van Claudio: "And Trey and Clovis cannot even be bothered to show their faces."

Amy Harrison: "Maybe they don't want to."

Marie looks at her.

Marie Van Claudio: "Excuse me?"

Amy leans against one of the lockers.

Amy Harrison: "You asked where they are."

Amy Harrison: "Maybe that's the answer."

Marie takes a step toward her.

Marie Van Claudio: "Be very careful."

Amy smiles faintly.

Amy Harrison: "There it is."

Marie Van Claudio: "There what is?"

Amy Harrison: "That."

Amy stands upright.

Amy Harrison: "Every time somebody says something you don't like, suddenly we're talking about loyalty."

Marie stares at her.

Amy Harrison: "Trey tried telling you."

That lands.

Marie Van Claudio: "Trey Mack doesn't tell me anything."

Amy Harrison: "Yeah."

Amy nods.

Amy Harrison: "That's probably why he's not here."

Valkyrie looks between them.

Marie notices.

Marie Van Claudio: "Do you have something to say?"

Valkyrie doesn't immediately answer.

Marie Van Claudio: "Valkyrie."

Valkyrie Knox: "No."

Marie nods.

Marie Van Claudio: "Good."

Amy looks at Valkyrie.

Then Marie.

Amy Harrison: "That's not good."

Marie Van Claudio: "What is your problem tonight?"

Amy Harrison: "Tonight?"

Amy actually laughs.

Amy Harrison: "Marie, this isn't tonight."

Marie folds her arms.

Amy Harrison: "You wanted to know whether Trey and Clovis belonged in The Empire."

Amy Harrison: "So you tested them."

Amy Harrison: "You put us across the ring from them."

Amy Harrison: "You tried to interfere."

Amy Harrison: "Trey stopped you."

Marie steps closer.

Marie Van Claudio: "And they walked away."

Amy Harrison: "After you told everybody you are The Empire."

Silence.

Marie doesn't blink.

Marie Van Claudio: "I am."

Amy looks at her for several seconds.

Amy Harrison: "Then what are we?"

That one lands harder.

Valkyrie slowly turns toward Marie.

Marie sees it.

Marie Van Claudio: "You know exactly what I meant."

Amy Harrison: "Do I?"

Marie Van Claudio: "I built this."

Amy Harrison: "Nobody said you didn't."

Marie Van Claudio: "I gave all of you direction."

Amy Harrison: "Nobody said you didn't."

Marie Van Claudio: "I made The Empire matter."

Amy pauses.

Amy Harrison: "Nobody said you didn't."

Marie waits for whatever comes next.

Amy doesn't give it to her.

That somehow makes it worse.

Marie turns toward Valkyrie.

Marie Van Claudio: "And you?"

Valkyrie looks at Amy.

Then back at Marie.

Valkyrie Knox: "I don't know."

Marie looks stunned.

Marie Van Claudio: "You don't know what?"

Valkyrie Knox: "What we are."

Silence.

Amy's expression changes slightly.

Even she wasn't expecting Valkyrie to say it.

Marie certainly wasn't.

Marie Van Claudio: "We are The Empire."

Valkyrie Knox: "I know."

Marie waits.

Valkyrie doesn't elaborate.

Marie looks between the two women.

Marie Van Claudio: "Trey and Clovis have poisoned this."

Amy immediately shakes her head.

Amy Harrison: "No."

Marie Van Claudio: "They have."

Amy Harrison: "They said it out loud."

Amy steps closer.

Amy Harrison: "That's different."

Marie Van Claudio: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Amy Harrison: "It means maybe they weren't the only ones thinking it."

Marie stares at her.

Amy lets that sit.

Then heads toward the door.

Marie Van Claudio: "Where are you going?"

Amy stops.

She looks back.

Amy Harrison: "Out."

Marie Van Claudio: "I didn't say we were finished."

Amy looks at Marie.

Amy Harrison: "I know."

Amy leaves.

The door closes.

Marie stands there.

Valkyrie remains.

Marie looks toward her.

For a moment, there is relief.

At least somebody stayed.

Marie Van Claudio: "Valkyrie."

Valkyrie looks at the closed door.

Then at Marie.

Valkyrie Knox: "I need some air."

She walks toward the door.

Marie Van Claudio: "Valkyrie."

Valkyrie stops.

But she doesn't turn around.

Marie Van Claudio: "Are you walking away from me?"

Valkyrie stands still.

Valkyrie Knox: "I'm walking out of a room."

She opens the door.

Valkyrie Knox: "That's all."

Valkyrie leaves.

The door closes.

Marie Van Claudio stands alone.

Again.

Five chairs.

One person.

Marie slowly looks around the locker room.

Her eyes settle on the empty chairs.

She reaches out.

Grabs one.

For a second, it looks like she's going to throw it.

She doesn't.

Marie carefully places it back where it was.

Perfectly straight.

Then another.

She adjusts it by barely an inch.

Control.

Something she can still control.

The camera slowly pulls backward.

Marie remains in the middle of the empty room.

Five chairs.

One person.

Fade out.

HE is Here

Segment

We cut backstage.

Maxwell Jett is moving quickly through the corridors of Crypto.com Arena.

Quickly for Maxwell, anyway.

Jacoby Jacobs and Darian Darrington follow several steps behind him.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Yo, Max."

Maxwell keeps walking.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Max."

Nothing.

Darian Darrington: "Where we going?"

Maxwell finally looks back.

The expression on his face is different.

Not concern.

Not urgency.

Anticipation.

That familiar Maxwell Jett smile is beginning to spread.

Maxwell Jett: "He's here."

Jacoby and Darian immediately look at one another.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Wait."

Jacoby points ahead.

Jacoby Jacobs: "HE he?"

Maxwell stops.

He turns.

Maxwell Jett: "How many times have I said there was a plan?"

Darian Darrington: "A lot."

Maxwell Jett: "How many times have I told you two that First Class isn't three guys who happen to stand next to each other?"

Jacoby Jacobs: "Also a lot."

Maxwell Jett: "And how many times did everybody else in this company laugh?"

Jacoby grins.

Jacoby Jacobs: "A lot."

Maxwell's smile widens.

Maxwell Jett: "Good."

He turns back around.

Maxwell Jett: "I want them laughing."

They continue.

The camera follows the three members of First Class through a set of double doors.

Into the loading area.

Then through another door.

The sound changes.

The roar of Crypto.com Arena becomes distant.

They emerge into the parking garage.

Maxwell keeps moving.

Jacoby and Darian follow.

Then they turn the corner.

And both men stop.

Maxwell doesn't.

Because Maxwell already knew what would be waiting.

The camera pans.

A tour bus sits in the parking garage.

But calling it a tour bus feels insulting.

This thing looks like somebody put a luxury hotel suite on wheels.

Massive.

Immaculate.

Polished black exterior.

Dark tinted windows.

Chrome catching every overhead light in the garage.

Not a production vehicle.

Not something supplied by UTA.

This arrived with somebody.

Somebody who apparently considers a normal automobile beneath them.

Jacoby slowly lowers his sunglasses.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Damn."

Darian just stares.

Darian Darrington: "That's his?"

Maxwell finally stops.

He looks back at them.

Maxwell Jett: "Obviously."

Jacoby walks a few steps closer.

Jacoby Jacobs: "This man brought a whole damn building."

Darian Darrington: "That's not a bus."

Darian points at it.

Darian Darrington: "That's property."

Maxwell adjusts the front of his jacket.

Maxwell Jett: "Gentlemen."

Jacoby and Darian look at him.

Maxwell Jett: "Try to act like you've seen money before."

Jacoby slowly looks at the bus again.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Not money like that."

Maxwell rolls his eyes.

Then—

A hiss.

The door of the bus begins to open.

All three men turn toward it.

The steps illuminate from within.

We can see light inside.

Expensive furnishings.

Leather.

Glass.

Just enough of the interior to reinforce that the exterior wasn't showing off.

If anything, it was underselling it.

Jacoby looks at Darian.

Darian looks at Jacoby.

Maxwell looks straight through the open doorway.

Someone is inside.

We don't see who.

Maxwell smiles.

Not his usual performative smile for the cameras.

This one is satisfaction.

The plan worked.

Maxwell Jett: "Told you."

Maxwell climbs the steps.

He disappears inside.

Jacoby immediately follows.

Then stops halfway through the doorway.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Oh, shit."

He disappears inside.

Darian looks toward the camera.

Then toward the bus.

Darian Darrington: "Oh, this is different."

He climbs aboard.

The door remains open.

The camera stays exactly where it is.

We hear voices from inside.

Not clearly enough to make out words.

Jacoby laughs.

Darian reacts loudly to something.

Then Maxwell's voice.

Maxwell Jett: "Gentlemen..."

A pause.

Maxwell Jett: "Welcome to First Class."

The bus door slowly closes.

We never see the person inside.

The door seals shut.

The tinted windows reveal nothing.

The camera holds on the enormous luxury bus.

John Phillips: "He's here."

Mark Bravo: "Apparently."

John Phillips: "For weeks, Maxwell Jett has been talking about somebody. After Kirsty McKinney eliminated him from the Ring King tournament, Maxwell said, 'Call him. Tell him it's time.'"

Mark Bravo: "And whoever 'him' is just arrived at Ring King in something that probably has a mortgage."

John Phillips: "The question we've been asking for weeks remains the same."

The camera slowly pushes toward the blacked-out windows.

John Phillips: "Who is inside that bus?"

Mark Bravo: "I don't know."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "But Maxwell Jett does."

The screen fades to black.

Daddy is Coming Home Soon

Segment

Backstage at Crypto.com Arena.

Madman Szalinski walks down the corridor toward his locker room.

He rounds the corner.

Stops.

Something is sitting outside his door.

A funeral wreath.

Large.

Fresh.

White flowers surround a circle of deep red roses, all carefully arranged around a black ribbon.

Madman stares at it.

Then looks down one end of the hallway.

Then the other.

Nobody.

He slowly approaches.

Madman Szalinski: "Well."

Madman studies the wreath.

Madman Szalinski: "Either somebody's trying to tell me something, or congratulations are getting really fucking aggressive."

No response.

Madman reaches for the locker room door.

He stops.

There is an envelope taped to it.

His name is written across the front.

MADMAN.

Nothing else.

Madman's expression changes slightly.

He pulls the envelope free.

Looks behind him again.

The hallway remains empty.

He opens it.

Inside is a photograph.

Madman pulls it free.

His face immediately changes.

The camera moves just enough to see what he's holding.

It's Peach the Puppy.

Madman doesn't make a joke this time.

He turns the photograph over.

Four words have been written across the back.

DADDY IS COMING HOME SOON.

Silence.

Madman reads it again.

Madman Szalinski: "Chris..."

A metallic crash echoes somewhere down the corridor.

Madman spins around.

Nobody.

A production assistant pushes a road case across the far intersection, completely unaware of him.

Madman watches until the crew member disappears.

He looks back at the photograph.

Then at the funeral wreath.

For the first time tonight, there is no grin.

Madman opens his locker room door.

He doesn't immediately enter.

Instead, he peers inside.

Nothing appears out of place.

Madman steps in.

He turns on the light.

Checks behind the door.

Checks the bathroom.

Checks behind the shower curtain.

Nothing.

Madman comes back into the main room.

He looks annoyed with himself for checking.

Madman Szalinski: "No."

He shakes his head.

Madman Szalinski: "No, no, no."

Madman points toward the hallway as if Ross could somehow hear him.

Madman Szalinski: "You don't get to do that."

He looks at the picture again.

Madman Szalinski: "I do the weird shit."

Beat.

Madman Szalinski: "That's my thing."

Nothing.

Madman places the photograph carefully on the table.

Face up.

He sits.

Tries to settle himself.

Outside the locker room, footsteps pass.

Madman's eyes immediately snap toward the door.

The footsteps continue.

Then fade.

Madman exhales through his nose.

He looks down at Peach.

Then toward the door again.

Madman Szalinski: "You wanted to be the fucking horror movie, Ross?"

Madman rises.

Madman Szalinski: "Fine."

He walks to the door.

Pulls it open.

The funeral wreath remains directly outside.

Madman stares at it.

Madman Szalinski: "But horror movies have rules."

A beat.

Madman Szalinski: "Probably."

Another beat.

Madman Szalinski: "I've seen like... six."

Madman reaches for the wreath.

Then stops.

Something catches his eye.

A small card is tucked between the flowers.

Madman slowly removes it.

There are only two words.

NOT YET.

Madman stares.

The humor is gone again.

He looks down the hallway.

Empty.

He turns the other direction.

Empty.

Madman backs into his locker room.

He closes the door.

The camera doesn't follow him.

Instead, it remains in the hallway.

Watching the closed door.

Watching the funeral wreath.

Nothing happens.

Five seconds.

Ten.

Still nothing.

The shot holds just long enough for the audience to expect Chris Ross to appear.

He doesn't.

Cut to black.

Still to Come

Segment

We return to a sweeping shot of Crypto.com Arena.

The camera moves across the packed crowd in Los Angeles, picking up signs, championship replicas, and more than a few homemade crowns scattered throughout the building.

At ringside, John Phillips and Mark Bravo sit behind the commentary desk.

John Phillips: "What a night it has already been here in Los Angeles."

Mark Bravo: "Already been? Johnny, look at what's still coming."

John Phillips: "Believe me, I know."

A graphic appears on screen.

RING KING 2026 — TONIGHT

Images from earlier in the evening flash across the screen.

Bianca Page holding the Hardcore Championship.

Yoshii celebrating with the United States Championship.

Samuel Scythe standing over Savior Hawkins with the Fighting Championship still in his possession.

Eric Dane Junior clutching the International Championship after defeating Bobby Dean.

John Phillips: "We've already seen two championships change hands tonight. Bianca Page survived Emily Hightower to become the new UTA Hardcore Champion."

Mark Bravo: "And after spending eight days telling everybody he was a superstar, Eric Dane Junior did the worst possible thing for the rest of us."

John Phillips: "He proved it."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly."

John Phillips: "Yoshii is once again United States Champion, although there are questions surrounding the involvement of Jed Dye in the closing moments of that match."

Mark Bravo: "Questions for everybody except Yoshii."

John Phillips: "And Samuel Scythe remains Fighting Champion after Savior Hawkins pushed him deep into his own rules before the referee finally had no choice but to stop the match."

The graphic changes.

Chris Ross stands on one side.

Madman Szalinski stands on the other.

The UTA Championship between them.

John Phillips: "And we are rapidly approaching our UTA Championship match."

Mark Bravo: "Rapidly?"

Bravo looks toward Phillips.

Mark Bravo: "After what we just saw backstage, I'm not sure I'd be in any hurry."

The image of the funeral wreath briefly appears.

Then the photograph of Peach.

DADDY IS COMING HOME SOON.

Phillips is quiet for a moment.

John Phillips: "We don't know who delivered that wreath."

Mark Bravo: "No."

John Phillips: "We don't know who left the photograph."

Mark Bravo: "No."

John Phillips: "And we don't know who wrote those words."

Bravo looks at him.

Mark Bravo: "You gonna make me say it?"

John Phillips: "I'm saying we cannot prove Chris Ross had anything to do with it."

Mark Bravo: "Fine."

Bravo looks directly into the camera.

Mark Bravo: "Then whoever did it has one hell of a sense of timing."

The graphic changes again.

A crown fills the screen.

Then two faces.

MIKEY UNLIKELY

MIKE BEST

RING KING 2026 FINAL

John Phillips: "And remember, the UTA Championship is not our final match tonight."

The tournament bracket appears.

Sixteen names.

Fifteen eliminated.

Two remaining.

John Phillips: "Sixteen competitors entered this tournament."

Mark Bravo: "Champions. Hall of Famers. Young stars. People who thought this was their year."

The bracket collapses until only the final remains.

MIKEY UNLIKELY vs. MIKE BEST

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely."

Three seconds flashes across the screen.

John Phillips: "Mike Best."

RESULTS replaces it.

John Phillips: "One of them leaves Los Angeles as the 2026 Ring King with a guaranteed opportunity at the UTA Championship."

Mark Bravo: "And think about that for a second."

Bravo points toward the Ross and Madman graphic displayed on one of the monitors beside them.

Mark Bravo: "Somebody is going to survive that."

Then he points toward the Ring King graphic.

Mark Bravo: "And before this night is over, we're going to know who has the right to come looking for him."

Phillips nods.

John Phillips: "The UTA Championship."

John Phillips: "The Ring King crown."

John Phillips: "The two biggest questions remaining tonight."

A final split-screen graphic appears.

UTA CHAMPIONSHIP

Chris Ross vs. Madman Szalinski.

RING KING FINAL

Mikey Unlikely vs. Mike Best.

John Phillips: "And we're about to answer the first."

Bravo doesn't immediately respond.

Instead, he looks toward the entranceway.

Mark Bravo: "Assuming Madman Szalinski still wants the answer."

Phillips turns toward the camera.

John Phillips: "Melissa Cartwright is standing by with the challenger."

Good News. Bad News.

Segment

Backstage.

Madman Szalinski stands in front of a mirror.

He's staring intensely at his own reflection.

Very intensely.

Uncomfortably intensely.

Melissa Cartwright stands several feet away with a microphone.

She waits.

Madman continues staring.

Melissa Cartwright: "Madman?"

Nothing.

Melissa Cartwright: "We're live."

Madman Szalinski: "I know."

He doesn't look away from the mirror.

Melissa Cartwright: "Okay."

Another beat.

Madman Szalinski: "I'm trying to determine whether I look like a man who's about to make an excellent decision."

Melissa looks at him.

Then at his reflection.

Melissa Cartwright: "And?"

Madman considers it.

Madman Szalinski: "Results inconclusive."

He finally turns around.

Madman Szalinski: "But I've got good news."

Melissa Cartwright: "What's the good news?"

Madman Szalinski: "I got what I wanted."

The humor doesn't disappear.

But something underneath it changes.

Madman Szalinski: "I went looking for the Reaper."

Madman starts counting on his fingers.

Madman Szalinski: "I walked around this place with a Revolutionary War musket."

One finger.

Madman Szalinski: "Found the man's locker room."

Another.

Madman Szalinski: "Kicked the door open."

Another.

Madman Szalinski: "Yelled for the Reaper of Harrisburg to come out and face me."

He pauses.

Madman Szalinski: "And then there was the unfortunate firearm-related incident."

Melissa Cartwright: "You fired the musket."

Madman Szalinski: "Accidentally."

Melissa Cartwright: "Near Chris Ross."

Madman Szalinski: "Very important word, 'near.' Thank you."

Another finger.

Madman Szalinski: "Then I charged him."

Another.

Madman Szalinski: "Tripped over him."

Madman looks at the finger.

Madman Szalinski: "Not my most technically impressive offensive maneuver."

Another finger.

Madman Szalinski: "And then I tagged the UTA Champion."

Melissa stares at him.

Madman Szalinski: "Literally."

He reaches out and taps Melissa lightly on the shoulder.

Madman Szalinski: "Tag."

Madman withdraws his hand.

Madman Szalinski: "'Anytime, anywhere. The Madness can strike too.'"

He nods proudly.

Madman Szalinski: "I thought that was pretty good."

Melissa Cartwright: "Chris eventually responded."

Madman Szalinski: "Oh, yeah."

Madman slowly lowers his hand.

Madman Szalinski: "Motherfucker hid in my car."

Melissa almost smiles.

Madman Szalinski: "That's when you start reconsidering some life choices."

Madman looks back into the mirror.

Madman Szalinski: "Because somewhere along the way, the game changed."

He turns back toward Melissa.

Madman Szalinski: "See, everybody thought I wanted Chris Ross to give me a championship match."

Melissa Cartwright: "Didn't you?"

Madman Szalinski: "Sure."

Beat.

Madman Szalinski: "But I didn't want him to give me shit."

Madman's voice settles.

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted him to want the match."

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted him to look at Madman Szalinski and decide, all by himself, that he needed to do something about me."

Madman Szalinski: "So I poked."

Madman Szalinski: "And I poked."

Madman Szalinski: "And I poked."

He pauses.

Madman Szalinski: "Sometimes with a musket."

Melissa Cartwright: "Why?"

Madman Szalinski: "Because I figured eventually he'd get angry."

Madman shrugs.

Madman Szalinski: "Angry people make mistakes."

A beat.

Madman Szalinski: "Good plan."

Another beat.

Madman Szalinski: "One problem."

Melissa Cartwright: "Chris Ross didn't get angry."

Madman points at her.

Madman Szalinski: "Bingo."

Now the smile fades.

Madman Szalinski: "He got interested."

Silence.

Madman Szalinski: "And there's the bad news."

Madman looks toward the direction of the arena.

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted the Reaper's attention."

Madman Szalinski: "Now I have all of it."

Melissa studies him.

Melissa Cartwright: "Chris Ross told you that one of you is walking out tonight and the other is leaving in an ambulance."

Madman Szalinski: "Yeah."

Melissa Cartwright: "Are you afraid?"

Madman opens his mouth.

The automatic joke almost comes.

It doesn't.

Madman Szalinski: "Yeah."

Melissa wasn't expecting that.

Madman Szalinski: "Of course I am."

Madman Szalinski: "Chris Ross is the UTA Champion."

Madman Szalinski: "He's violent."

Madman Szalinski: "He's patient."

Madman Szalinski: "And now he has personally decided that beating my ass is something he'd like to spend his Saturday night doing."

Madman nods.

Madman Szalinski: "I'm crazy."

Beat.

Madman Szalinski: "I'm not fucking stupid."

Another beat.

Madman Szalinski: "Well."

He tilts his head.

Madman Szalinski: "Not completely."

There's Madman again.

Then it's gone.

Madman Szalinski: "But being afraid doesn't mean you run."

He steps closer to the camera.

Madman Szalinski: "Chris."

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted you to turn around."

Madman Szalinski: "You did."

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted you to see me."

Madman Szalinski: "You do."

Madman Szalinski: "I wanted you to decide that Madman Szalinski was worth your time."

Madman leans toward the camera.

Madman Szalinski: "Well, motherfucker..."

Madman Szalinski: "Here I am."

A long beat.

Madman Szalinski: "You said I wanted my shot."

Madman Szalinski: "You're right."

Madman Szalinski: "You said I got it."

Madman Szalinski: "You're right."

Madman Szalinski: "And you told me to survive it."

Madman slowly nods.

Madman Szalinski: "That's the plan."

He starts to leave.

Stops.

Turns back toward Melissa.

Madman Szalinski: "How'd I look?"

Melissa Cartwright: "What?"

Madman Szalinski: "Excellent decision."

Melissa looks him over.

Melissa Cartwright: "Still inconclusive."

Madman nods solemnly.

Madman Szalinski: "God damn, son."

Madman walks away.

Melissa watches him disappear down the corridor.

We return to Crypto.com Arena.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski wanted the attention of the UTA Champion."

Mark Bravo: "Be careful what you wish for."

John Phillips: "He got his championship match."

Mark Bravo: "No, John. He got something worse."

The lights begin to fall.

Mark Bravo: "He got Chris Ross interested."

The UTA Championship graphic fills the screen.

CHRIS ROSS

MADMAN SZALINSKI

UTA CHAMPIONSHIP

Madman Szalinski vs. Chris Ross

Match

The Los Angeles crowd erupts.

Thousands are already standing.

John Phillips: "There are moments when you can feel a building change."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

John Phillips: "This is one of them."

The camera moves through the crowd.

Some are cheering.

Some are holding phones overhead.

Some are simply staring toward the entrance.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski spent weeks demanding the attention of Chris Ross."

Mark Bravo: "And that's the part that keeps bothering me."

John Phillips: "What part?"

Mark Bravo: "He got it."

A graphic briefly appears across the bottom of the screen.

UTA CHAMPIONSHIP

MADMAN SZALINSKI vs. CHRIS ROSS (c)

Mark Bravo: "People spend their whole careers trying to get a champion's attention. Madman spent the last several weeks making sure Chris Ross couldn't ignore him."

John Phillips: "The musket. The locker room. The games. The taunting. Madman telling Ross that if the Reaper could

strike anytime, anywhere, then so could the Madness."

Mark Bravo: "And Chris Ross eventually stopped laughing."

The graphic disappears.

Mark Bravo: "That's when this stopped being funny."

The arena lights drop.

The reaction builds.

For everything that's happened tonight—the funeral wreath, the photograph of Peach, the message left for Madman—there is anticipation now rather than paranoia.

Because there is nowhere left to hide.

It's time.

Madman Szalinski emerges.

The crowd ROARS.

And for perhaps the first time during this entire issue with Chris Ross...

Madman doesn't immediately do anything ridiculous.

He stands at the entrance.

Five-foot-eleven.

One-hundred-eighty-five pounds.

Looking down toward the ring.

Then around Crypto.com Arena.

Madman takes it in.

John Phillips: "Listen to Los Angeles."

The volume continues rising.

John Phillips: "Whatever you think of Madman Szalinski—and there are probably several hundred answers to that question—this is important to him."

Mark Bravo: "It should be."

Madman starts down the aisle.

Mark Bravo: "People see the jokes. They see the weird shit. They see a man walking around backstage with an antique firearm and think they've figured him out."

Madman looks toward a fan reaching across the barricade.

He slaps the hand.

Another.

Another.

But his eyes keep returning to the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Don't confuse strange with harmless."

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski has held the UTA Championship before."

A roar rises from another section as Madman passes.

John Phillips: "He has stood at the top of this company before. He knows what that championship weighs. He knows what it takes to earn it."

Madman reaches ringside.

He stops.

Looks at the ring.

Then slowly turns his head toward the entranceway behind him.

Nothing.

No Chris Ross.

No wreath.

No message.

Madman catches himself doing it.

He shakes his head.

Madman Szalinski: "Fuck that."

He turns back toward the ring.

Slides underneath the bottom rope.

Madman immediately rises and walks to the center.

He doesn't climb a turnbuckle.

Doesn't play to the cameras.

Doesn't look underneath the ring for something stupid.

He just stands there.

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight, Melissa Cartwright asked Madman Szalinski if he was afraid."

Mark Bravo: "And he said yes."

John Phillips: "No joke. No deflection."

Mark Bravo: "That's not weakness, John."

Madman begins pacing.

Mark Bravo: "You know what scares me more than a crazy man who doesn't understand what he's walking into?"

John Phillips: "What's that?"

Mark Bravo: "A crazy man who understands it perfectly and walks in anyway."

Madman stops pacing.

He looks toward the entrance.

Waiting.

John Phillips: "And let's remember something else."

Phillips lets the crowd fill the silence for a moment.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski didn't stumble into this opportunity."

John Phillips: "He didn't ask Scott Stevens for charity."

John Phillips: "He wanted Chris Ross to choose him."

Mark Bravo: "Congratulations."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "The Reaper chose."

Madman rolls his neck.

He stretches his arms against the ropes.

Then he steps backward toward his corner.

The camera moves close.

Madman notices it.

For just a second, that familiar look returns.

Madman Szalinski: "This seemed like a much better idea three weeks ago."

The crowd laughs.

Madman smirks.

Then the smile disappears.

His eyes return to the entrance.

John Phillips: "That's Madman Szalinski."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

John Phillips: "But tonight, underneath everything that makes him Madman..."

The camera tightens on the challenger.

John Phillips: "...there is a former UTA Champion standing in that ring."

Madman grips the top rope.

John Phillips: "And he believes he can become champion again."

The arena begins to darken even further.

Madman's expression hardens.

He knows what's next.

So does everyone else.

Mark Bravo: "All right."

A final bank of lights shuts off.

Mark Bravo: "Here comes the bad news."

Darkness.

For a moment, Crypto.com Arena is almost completely black.

Madman Szalinski remains visible only because of the faint light spilling across the ring.

He waits.

Then...

"Black Flame" by Bury Tomorrow.

The opening hits.

Red lights flash.

Blue.

White.

Red again.

Like police lights cutting through the darkness.

The titantron comes alive with images of the streets of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The crowd erupts.

Madman doesn't move.

John Phillips: "The Reaper of Harrisburg."

Mark Bravo: "And suddenly that wreath doesn't seem quite so funny."

The UTA Championship appears on the screen.

Then the champion emerges.

CHRIS ROSS.

UTA Championship around his waist.

No smile.

No grand pose.

No acknowledgement of Los Angeles.

Chris Ross storms through the entrance and immediately locks eyes with the ring.

More specifically...

With Madman Szalinski.

Madman stares back.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross won the UTA Championship at One Last Stop in Toronto. He walked into a Triple Threat Match against Maxwell Jett and Mike Best and walked out as champion."

Mark Bravo: "And ever since then, people have been asking how you take that championship away from him."

Ross starts down the aisle.

His pace never changes.

Mark Bravo: "Tonight Madman gets to try answering the question."

Ross passes fans reaching toward him.

He doesn't touch a single hand.

He doesn't even look at them.

Madman remains against the ropes.

Watching.

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight Madman Szalinski found a funeral wreath outside his locker room."

Mark Bravo: "Yep."

John Phillips: "A photograph of Peach."

Mark Bravo: "Yep."

John Phillips: "The message, 'Daddy is coming home soon.'"

Ross continues walking.

John Phillips: "We have no proof Chris Ross was responsible."

Mark Bravo: "And look at him."

Ross reaches ringside.

Mark Bravo: "Does that look like a man who's going to help us clear things up?"

Ross stops at the edge of the ring.

He looks up.

Madman looks down.

Neither man says anything.

Ross reaches down.

Unfastens the UTA Championship from his waist.

He holds it in one hand.

Then slides beneath the bottom rope.

Madman instinctively takes one step forward.

Ross rises.

Madman stops.

The champion and challenger are now standing inside the same ring for the first time tonight.

The noise rises.

Ross walks past Madman.

Not around him.

Past him.

Close enough for their shoulders to nearly touch.

Ross reaches the corner.

He sits.

Back against the bottom turnbuckle.

UTA Championship resting across his lap.

And he looks across the ring at Madman Szalinski.

Madman looks back.

John Phillips: "Look at this."

Mark Bravo: "That's what Madman wanted."

John Phillips: "What?"

Mark Bravo: "That."

Bravo points toward Ross.

Mark Bravo: "Every ounce of Chris Ross's attention."

Ross doesn't blink.

Mark Bravo: "Congratulations."

Madman slowly steps away from his corner.

Ross remains seated.

John Phillips: "Madman said earlier tonight that he wanted Ross to decide he was worth hunting."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and I'm starting to think maybe nobody explained the second half of hunting to him."

Madman walks to the center of the ring.

Ross watches him.

Madman spreads his arms.

Come on.

The crowd responds.

Ross finally moves.

He rises from the corner.

Slowly.

He picks up the UTA Championship.

Walks toward the center.

Madman doesn't retreat.

Ross stops directly in front of him.

The height difference is noticeable.

The weight difference even more so.

Ross looks down at Madman.

Madman looks up at Ross.

And smiles.

Not the wild grin.

Not the joke.

A small smile.

The kind that says he's exactly where he wanted to be.

Ross looks at it.

Nothing.

He raises the UTA Championship.

Not toward the crowd.

Between himself and Madman.

Madman's eyes move to the championship.

Then immediately return to Ross.

John Phillips: "That's what this is ultimately about."

Mark Bravo: "Don't be so sure."

John Phillips: "It's the UTA Championship."

Mark Bravo: "For Madman."

Ross lowers the championship.

Mark Bravo: "I'm not convinced Chris Ross gives a damn whether that belt is between them anymore."

The official approaches.

Ross finally breaks eye contact long enough to hand over the UTA Championship.

The official raises it high.

The crowd surges again.

John Phillips: "This is what every competitor in this company is supposed to want."

The championship turns beneath the arena lights.

John Phillips: "The UTA Championship."

The official shows it to Madman.

Madman nods.

Then to Ross.

Ross barely acknowledges it.

The title is handed out of the ring.

Madman backs toward his corner.

Ross does the same.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross. Six-foot-two. Two-hundred-fifty-five pounds."

Mark Bravo: "Power. Suplexes. Strikes. And a willingness to turn a wrestling match into something you regret agreeing to."

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski. Five-foot-eleven. One-hundred-eighty-five pounds."

Mark Bravo: "And if you think that means he doesn't belong here, you haven't been paying attention."

Madman crouches slightly.

Ross stands almost perfectly upright.

John Phillips: "Former UTA Champion."

Mark Bravo: "And that's important."

The official looks toward Madman.

Ready.

Looks toward Ross.

Ready.

Mark Bravo: "Forget the musket."

The crowd begins clapping rhythmically.

Mark Bravo: "Forget the tag game."

Madman's eyes narrow.

Mark Bravo: "Forget the funeral wreath."

Ross rolls his shoulders.

Mark Bravo: "We're about to find out whether Chris Ross has been hunting a lunatic..."

The official raises his hand.

Mark Bravo: "...or another UTA Champion."

The bell rings.

Neither man moves.

Chris Ross stands near his corner.

Madman Szalinski stands across from him.

Crypto.com Arena buzzes with anticipation.

Ross slowly steps forward.

Madman does the same.

No charge.

No wild punch.

No joke.

They circle.

John Phillips: "UTA Championship on the line. Chris Ross defending against Madman Szalinski, and after everything that has happened between these two, I'm almost surprised we're starting this way."

Mark Bravo: "I don't think Ross is."

John Phillips: "You don't?"

Mark Bravo: "Look at him. He's waiting for Madman to do something stupid."

Ross raises his hands.

Madman looks at them.

Then they lock up.

Ross immediately drives forward.

The seventy-pound weight advantage announces itself in a hurry.

Madman's boots skid across the canvas as Ross walks him backward toward the corner.

The official moves between them as they reach the ropes.

Ross holds Madman there.

One second.

Two.

Three.

Then Ross releases.

Clean.

Almost.

Ross gives Madman a little shove against the chest as he backs away.

Madman looks down at the spot Ross touched.

Then up at Ross.

Ross motions with both hands.

Again.

Madman obliges.

Second lockup.

Ross drives forward—

Madman pivots.

Ross suddenly finds himself redirected into the ropes.

Madman grabs the wrist, twists underneath, and cranks the arm.

Ross turns with it.

Madman changes position.

Hammerlock.

Ross reaches behind him.

Madman ducks the hand.

Ross tries turning the opposite direction.

Madman follows.

Still attached.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski controlling the champion's arm."

Mark Bravo: "There it is."

John Phillips: "What?"

Mark Bravo: "The thing everybody forgets."

Ross reaches backward again.

Madman changes levels and drags him down.

Ross hits the canvas.

Madman floats across the back.

Front facelock.

Ross starts to rise.

Madman keeps his weight over the shoulders.

Mark Bravo: "Madman Szalinski didn't become UTA Champion because he was funny."

Ross powers upward.

Madman's feet leave the mat for a moment.

He immediately releases and slips behind.

Waistlock.

Ross reaches down to break the hands.

Madman switches to the wrist again.

Ross finally spins through and SHOVES him away.

Madman rolls backward.

Comes right back to his feet.

The crowd applauds.

Ross stops.

Madman smiles.

Ross doesn't.

John Phillips: "And Madman Szalinski may have just surprised the UTA Champion."

Mark Bravo: "Good."

John Phillips: "Good?"

Mark Bravo: "If Madman walks into this trying to out-crazy Chris Ross, he's going to the hospital."

Madman gestures.

Come on.

Ross circles again.

This time there's no invitation to lock up.

Ross shoots forward.

Madman sidesteps.

Ross turns.

Madman catches the arm.

Another twist.

Ross fires a forearm.

Madman ducks it.

Dropkick to the knee.

Ross drops onto one leg.

Madman hits the ropes.

Low dropkick to the shoulder sends Ross sideways.

Ross rolls through to the ropes.

Madman doesn't follow.

He resets in the center.

John Phillips: "Smart."

Mark Bravo: "Very."

Ross pulls himself upright.

Mark Bravo: "Madman isn't trying to knock down a two-hundred-fifty-five-pound man. He's making Ross move. Making him turn. Making him reset."

John Phillips: "And refusing to get trapped."

Mark Bravo: "So far."

Ross approaches more carefully.

Madman circles.

Ross cuts him off.

Madman changes direction.

Ross follows.

Madman reaches for the arm again—

Ross grabs him by the back of the neck.

Madman's eyes widen.

Ross YANKS him forward.

Madman goes face-first into the canvas.

The entire complexion of the match changes in one movement.

Mark Bravo: "There."

Ross doesn't cover.

Madman starts getting up.

Ross lets him.

Madman reaches his knees.

Ross steps forward.

THUD.

A forearm crashes across Madman's upper back.

Madman falls to his hands.

Ross grabs him around the waist.

He lifts.

GERMAN SUPLEX.

Madman lands hard across his shoulders.

Ross maintains the waistlock.

He drags Madman back up.

John Phillips: "Madman had the right strategy, but Ross only needed to get his hands on him once!"

Ross lifts again.

Madman hooks a leg around Ross's.

Blocks it.

Ross tries again.

Madman blocks again.

Back elbow.

Ross takes it.

Another.

Ross's grip loosens.

A third elbow breaks it.

Madman runs.

Ross follows.

Madman rebounds.

Ross swings—

Madman ducks.

Hits the opposite ropes.

Ross turns—

Madman launches himself at the champion!

Both men tumble through the ropes!
They crash to the floor.
The crowd rises.
John Phillips: "Madman takes Ross out of the ring!"
Mark Bravo: "And now be careful."
Madman rolls onto his back.
Ross pushes onto his hands.
Both begin rising.
Madman gets there first.
He fires a forearm.
Ross answers.
Madman fires another.
Ross answers harder.
Madman staggers.
Ross grabs him.
Madman immediately drives a knee into Ross's stomach.
Then another.
He grabs Ross by the head and runs him toward the ring—
Ross reverses!
Madman goes shoulder-first into the apron.
He collapses.
Ross stands over him.
Mark Bravo: "This is where Madman cannot stay."
John Phillips: "Outside the ring?"
Mark Bravo: "Anywhere Ross can turn this into a fight."
Ross pulls Madman upright.
He grabs him around the waist.
Madman immediately hooks the barricade.
Ross pulls.
Madman hangs on.
Ross pulls harder.
Madman's feet leave the floor.
He desperately keeps both hands wrapped around the barricade.

John Phillips: "Ross is trying to suplex him on the floor!"

Mark Bravo: "And Madman knows exactly what that means!"

Madman kicks backward.

Once.

Twice.

Heel catches Ross in the knee.

The grip breaks.

Madman turns.

FOREARM.

Ross rocks backward.

Madman jumps onto the apron.

Ross advances.

Madman runs along the apron—

DIVES!

He catches Ross high around the shoulders and both men crash into the barricade!

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski throwing everything he has at Chris Ross!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not madness. That's necessity."

Madman is hurting.

Ross is hurting.

The official's count climbs.

Madman hears it.

He grabs Ross.

Starts dragging the champion toward the ring.

Ross suddenly drives Madman backward into the apron.

Madman's spine hits hard.

Ross rolls underneath the bottom rope.

Madman follows immediately.

Both beat the count.

Madman pushes himself up—

Ross is waiting.

Madman turns.

Ross EXPLODES forward.

SPINEBUSTER.

Madman bounces off the canvas.

Ross hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Madman kicks out.

Ross sits beside him.

No frustration.

No surprise.

He looks down at Madman.

Madman rolls onto his side, clutching his back.

John Phillips: "First cover of the match belongs to the champion."

Mark Bravo: "And pay attention to Ross."

Ross remains seated.

Watching.

Mark Bravo: "He's not trying to win yet."

John Phillips: "What makes you say that?"

Mark Bravo: "Because Chris Ross told us what matters to him."

Ross grabs Madman by the hair and slowly pulls him upright.

Mark Bravo: "The three-count doesn't mean shit."

Madman reaches his feet.

Ross pulls him close.

Mark Bravo: "He wants to find out whether Madman Szalinski walks out of Los Angeles."

Ross hooks him.

OVERHEAD BELLY-TO-BELLY SUPLEX.

Madman flies across the ring.

He lands hard.

Ross rises.

Madman crawls toward the ropes.

Ross follows.

Madman gets one hand on the middle rope.

Ross grabs him around the waist again.

Madman grabs the top rope.

Ross pulls.

Madman refuses to let go.

The official warns Ross.

Ross releases.

Madman turns—

And SLAPS Chris Ross across the face.

The building erupts.

Ross freezes.

Madman is breathing hard.

He knows exactly what he just did.

John Phillips: "Oh, Madman."

Mark Bravo: "There he is."

Madman looks Ross directly in the eyes.

Madman Szalinski: "Tag."

The crowd EXPLODES.

Ross's jaw tightens.

Madman immediately fires another forearm.

Then another.

Then another.

Ross gives ground.

Madman keeps coming.

Forearm.

Forearm.

Forearm.

Ross reaches the corner.

Madman climbs onto the second rope.

The crowd counts as Madman rains punches down.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

FOUR!

FIVE!

Ross grabs Madman around the waist.

Madman's eyes widen.

Ross walks him out of the corner.

Madman starts hammering down with fists.

Ross keeps moving.

Madman hits him again.

Again.

Ross's grip begins to slip.

Madman drops behind!

Ross turns—

Madman catches him with a kick to the knee!

Ross drops.

Madman hits the ropes.

Ross rises—

Madman barrels into him!

Ross stumbles backward into the ropes.

Madman rebounds again.

Another running shot!

Ross nearly goes through them.

Madman backs up.

The crowd is roaring now.

He charges a third time—

Ross catches him.

Madman is lifted clean off the canvas.

Ross turns.

RUNNING MUSCLE BUSTER!

Madman's body folds into the canvas.

The arena gasps.

Ross covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN KICKS OUT!

The crowd erupts.

Ross stays over him.
For the first time...
There's a reaction.
Not shock.
Not anger.
Interest.
Madman rolls onto his stomach.
He tries pushing himself up.
His arms shake.
Ross kneels beside him.
Madman gets one knee underneath himself.
Ross leans closer.
Chris Ross: "You still interested?"
Madman breathes heavily.
He slowly turns his head toward Ross.
Madman Szalinski: "Results..."
Madman coughs.
Madman Szalinski: "...inconclusive."
The crowd roars.
Ross stares at him.
Then grabs him by the head.
Mark Bravo: "He just had to say something."
John Phillips: "That's who Madman Szalinski is."
Mark Bravo: "And Chris Ross is about to make him pay for it."
Ross drags Madman back to his feet.
Madman can barely stand.
Ross pulls him in.
The champion isn't smiling.
But something has changed.
John Phillips: "Madman wanted Chris Ross interested."
Ross tightens his grip.
John Phillips: "I think he has him."
Chris Ross pulls Madman Szalinski upright.

Madman's legs aren't entirely cooperating.

Ross doesn't care.

He drives a forearm across Madman's jaw.

Madman stumbles into the ropes.

Ross follows.

Another forearm.

Madman's head snaps backward.

Ross grabs the wrist and sends him across the ring.

Madman rebounds.

Ross catches him around the waist.

OVERHEAD BELLY-TO-BELLY!

Madman crashes down near the corner.

Ross follows immediately.

John Phillips: "And now Ross is dictating everything."

Mark Bravo: "This is where the size difference becomes a nightmare. Madman can wrestle around it. He can move around it. But every time Ross catches him, Madman has to pay a toll."

Madman uses the ropes to stand.

Ross charges.

Madman moves!

Ross crashes chest-first into the turnbuckles.

Madman drops to one knee.

Ross turns around.

Madman springs forward and catches him with a forearm.

Ross barely moves.

Madman hits another.

Ross rocks backward.

Madman throws a third.

Ross answers with one of his own.

Madman drops.

Mark Bravo: "See?"

John Phillips: "Madman threw three. Ross needed one."

Mark Bravo: "So don't have that fight."

Ross reaches down.

Madman suddenly rolls him forward!

ONE!

TWO!

Ross powers out!

Both men scramble up.

Madman catches Ross coming forward and takes him down again!

ONE!

TWO!

Ross kicks out!

Madman immediately tries another cover!

ONE!

Ross throws him off before two.

Madman rolls away.

Ross gets to his feet.

And stops.

Madman is already waiting.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski nearly stole the UTA Championship twice!"

Mark Bravo: "Don't call it stealing."

John Phillips: "Fair."

Mark Bravo: "That's wrestling. Ross wants to know which one of them leaves in an ambulance? Fine. Madman only needs the referee's hand to hit the canvas three times."

Ross advances.

Madman retreats.

Ross cuts off the angle.

Madman goes the other way.

Ross cuts that off too.

Madman finds himself in the corner.

Ross charges.

Madman slips through the ropes!

Ross stops before impact.

Madman is on the apron.

Ross turns.

Madman snaps his neck across the top rope!

Ross stumbles backward.

Madman climbs.

He doesn't hesitate.

Madman launches from the top!

He catches Ross high and drives him down!

The crowd erupts.

Madman hooks both legs!

ONE!

TWO!

ROSS KICKS OUT!

Madman rolls away from the force.

He looks toward the official.

Two.

Madman nods.

John Phillips: "And listen to this crowd!"

Mark Bravo: "They're starting to believe."

Madman gets up.

Ross is on one knee.

Madman runs.

Ross swings.

Madman ducks.

He rebounds.

Ross turns—

Madman jumps onto him!

Ross catches him.

Madman immediately rains elbows down against the side of Ross's head.

Ross staggers.

Madman keeps hitting him.

Ross loses his grip.

Madman lands behind him.

Ross turns.

Madman kicks the knee.

Ross drops to one leg.

Madman hits the ropes.

Running strike catches Ross across the face!

Ross falls!

Madman covers!

ONE!

TWO!

Ross kicks out!

John Phillips: "Another two!"

Mark Bravo: "And notice what's happening. Ross is still doing more damage. But Madman is getting more chances to win."

Madman grabs Ross.

Ross drives a fist into his ribs.

Madman folds.

Another.

Madman releases him.

Ross grabs Madman around the waist.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Madman lands on his shoulders.

Ross hangs on.

He pulls him back up.

SECOND GERMAN SUPLEX!

Still holding him.

Madman's eyes are glassy.

Ross stands.

John Phillips: "Again?"

Mark Bravo: "This is what Ross does."

Ross lifts—

Madman flips backward!

He lands awkwardly on his feet!

His legs nearly buckle.

Ross turns.

Madman throws himself forward with everything he has.

Both men collide.

Both fall.

The crowd applauds.

Madman crawls.

Ross rolls onto his stomach.

Madman reaches the ropes.

Ross reaches his knees.

John Phillips: "Madman is finding answers."

Mark Bravo: "Some of them aren't pretty answers."

John Phillips: "Do they have to be?"

Mark Bravo: "Not against Chris Ross."

Madman pulls himself upright.

Ross does the same.

They meet in the center.

Madman throws a forearm.

Ross answers.

Madman fires again.

Ross fires again.

Madman.

Ross.

Madman.

Ross.

The crowd begins reacting to every strike.

Madman throws another.

Ross answers harder.

Madman staggers.

Ross waits.

Madman looks back at him.

And laughs.

Ross's expression changes.

Madman waves him forward.

Madman Szalinski: "Come on, motherfucker."

Ross obliges.

FOREARM.

Madman drops to a knee.

He rises.

Ross hits him again.

Madman drops.

He rises again.

John Phillips: "Madman, don't do this."

Mark Bravo: "Too late."

Ross hits him again.

Madman falls against the ropes.

Ross approaches.

Madman spits toward the canvas.

Looks up.

Madman Szalinski: "That all you got?"

Mark Bravo: "Oh, that's a terrible question."

Ross grabs Madman.

Madman suddenly BITES him.

The crowd explodes.

Ross recoils.

The official immediately admonishes Madman.

Madman releases.

Madman Szalinski: "Sorry."

Ross stares at him.

Madman points at Ross.

Madman Szalinski: "He looked delicious."

Mark Bravo: "There it is."

Ross charges.

Madman ducks.

Ross hits the ropes.

Madman turns—

ROSS BITES MADMAN!

The building loses it.

John Phillips: "OH COME ON!"

Mark Bravo: "Apparently Madman also looked delicious!"

The official forces Ross away.

Madman holds the side of his head.

He looks absolutely offended.

Madman Szalinski: "HEY!"

Ross doesn't care.

Madman points at the official.

Madman Szalinski: "He bit me!"

The official just stares at him.

Madman realizes the problem.

Madman Szalinski: "...fair."

Ross comes forward.

Madman kicks him in the stomach.

He tries to capitalize.

Ross blocks.

Ross grabs him.

EXPLODER SUPLEX!

Madman crashes into the corner.

Ross gets up.

Madman is crumpled against the bottom turnbuckle.

Ross backs across the ring.

John Phillips: "This could be bad."

Ross charges.

Madman moves!

Ross's attack misses!

Madman scrambles up.

Ross turns.

Madman throws a kick.

Ross catches it.

Madman jumps with the other leg and catches Ross in the head!

Ross releases him.

Madman falls.

Ross staggers into the corner.

Madman sees it.

He charges.

Ross catches him—

Madman twists!

Ross goes face-first into the turnbuckle!

Madman rolls him backward!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS KICKS OUT!

Crypto.com Arena ERUPTS.

Madman sits upright.

He looks at the official.

Two.

Only two.

John Phillips: "THAT was close!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the first one Ross felt."

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski was a fraction of a second away from becoming UTA Champion!"

Madman pounds the canvas once.

Then stops himself.

No frustration.

Get up.

He gets up.

Ross is already rising.

Madman moves toward him.

Ross suddenly spins.

10-71!

The 360-degree discus elbow catches Madman flush.

Madman collapses.

The crowd gasps.

Ross falls across him.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN GETS A SHOULDER UP!

Ross rolls off.

The crowd explodes again.

John Phillips: "MADMAN SURVIVES THE 10-71!"

Mark Bravo: "And now look at Chris Ross."

Ross sits beside Madman.

He looks at the official.

Two.

Ross looks back down.

Madman is barely moving.

Mark Bravo: "That's different."

John Phillips: "The champion is frustrated."

Mark Bravo: "No."

Ross slowly rises.

Mark Bravo: "He's recalculating."

Ross reaches down.

He pulls Madman upright.

Madman can barely hold his head up.

Ross grabs his wrist.

Pulls him in.

Madman suddenly collapses before Ross can strike.

Ross looks down.

The official checks Madman.

Ross backs away.

Madman shakes his head.

No.

He grabs the official's shirt and uses it to pull himself up.

The official pushes his hand away.

Madman sways.

Ross watches.

John Phillips: "Madman may not know where he is."

Mark Bravo: "He knows enough to refuse to stay down."

Madman turns.

Ross charges.

25 TO LIFE!

Madman DUCKS the cyclone kick!

Ross spins through.
Madman catches him from behind!
Ross fights the grip.
Madman desperately hangs on.
Ross reaches backward.
Madman changes position.
Ross turns.
Madman catches him!
He takes Ross down!
And Madman immediately transitions into a submission!
The crowd rises as one.
John Phillips: "WAIT A MINUTE!"
Ross's eyes widen.
Madman wrenches back.
Ross reaches.
There is no rope nearby.
John Phillips: "MADMAN HAS HIM!"
Mark Bravo: "This is how Madman has won big matches before!"
Ross reaches toward the canvas.
His hand hovers.
Madman pulls harder.
John Phillips: "Chris Ross has said he will never submit!"
Mark Bravo: "Then Madman doesn't need him to!"
Ross's face contorts.
Madman screams as he puts everything he has into the hold.
The crowd is deafening.
John Phillips: "ROSS IS TRAPPED!"
Ross tries crawling.
Madman drags him backward.
The crowd erupts again.
Mark Bravo: "THAT is Madman Szalinski!"
Ross plants one hand.
Then the other.

He tries pushing upward.
Madman hangs on.
Ross drops back down.
John Phillips: "The champion may have nowhere to go!"
Madman adjusts.
Ross's hand reaches again.
Not for the ropes.
For Madman's grip.
He can't break it.
Madman pulls harder.
John Phillips: "WE COULD HAVE A NEW CHAMPION!"
Ross's hand rises.
The entire arena sees it.
Madman's eyes widen.
Ross's hand hangs over the canvas.
For one extraordinary moment...
It looks like Chris Ross might tap.
Chris Ross's hand hangs over the canvas.
Madman Szalinski pulls back with everything he has.
Crypto.com Arena is on its feet.
John Phillips: "ROSS IS TRAPPED!"
Ross's hand shakes.
It drops—
NO!
Ross plants his palm against the canvas.
Not a tap.
A post.
Ross pushes.
Madman cranks harder.
Ross pushes again.
His face is twisted in pain.
Mark Bravo: "He's not tapping."
John Phillips: "He may not have a choice!"

Mark Bravo: "Chris Ross would rather tear something than admit another man made him quit."

Ross gets one knee underneath himself.

Madman immediately shifts his weight.

Ross drops again.

The crowd erupts.

Madman screams through clenched teeth.

Madman Szalinski: "COME ON!"

Ross reaches backward.

Can't find Madman.

Reaches again.

Madman pulls tighter.

Ross's arm falls to the canvas.

The official moves closer.

John Phillips: "Watch Ross! Watch the champion!"

The official checks him.

Ross responds.

Barely.

Madman sees it.

He adjusts again.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski has the UTA Champion in serious trouble!"

Mark Bravo: "This isn't the musket guy."

Madman pulls.

Mark Bravo: "This isn't the man playing tag backstage."

Ross's face presses against the canvas.

Mark Bravo: "This is the man who has been UTA Champion before."

Madman screams.

Mark Bravo: "And he is trying to become UTA Champion again!"

Ross suddenly plants both hands.

Pushes.

Madman hangs on.

Ross gets one knee beneath him.

Then the other.

Madman's eyes widen.

Ross is rising.

Slowly.

Painfully.

But rising.

John Phillips: "How the hell is Ross doing this?!"

Madman climbs higher onto Ross's back.

Ross reaches his feet.

He staggers.

Madman refuses to release.

Ross takes one step backward.

Another.

Madman realizes where they're going.

Ross charges backward.

CRASH!

Madman is crushed into the turnbuckles.

He hangs on.

Ross does it again!

CRASH!

Madman's grip loosens.

Ross charges backward a third time!

Madman finally releases.

He drops behind Ross.

Both men collapse.

The crowd gives them a roaring ovation.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross survives!"

Mark Bravo: "Survives is the word."

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski just pushed the UTA Champion to the brink."

Mark Bravo: "And now Ross knows."

John Phillips: "Knows what?"

Mark Bravo: "This isn't a game Madman talked himself into."

Both men remain down.

Ross flexes his fingers.

Madman clutches his back.

The official checks both.

Ross waves him away.

Madman does the same.

Slowly, they begin moving.

Madman reaches the ropes first.

Ross gets onto one knee.

Madman stands.

Ross stands.

They turn.

Look at each other.

The crowd rises again.

Madman smiles.

Ross does not.

Madman steps forward.

Forearm.

Ross absorbs it.

Ross answers.

Madman staggers.

He comes back.

Forearm.

Ross answers.

Madman nearly falls.

He catches himself.

Comes back again.

John Phillips: "Madman refuses to give ground."

Mark Bravo: "At this point I'm not sure he remembers how."

Madman hits Ross.

Ross hits Madman.

Madman.

Ross.

Madman.

Ross.

Madman fires another—

Ross catches the arm.

HEADBUTT!

Madman stumbles backward.

Ross pulls him back in.

12 GAUGE!

The ripcord headbutt lands flush.

Madman collapses.

John Phillips: "TWELVE GAUGE!"

Ross drops into the cover.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN KICKS OUT!

The building erupts.

Ross immediately looks at the official.

Two.

Ross looks down at Madman.

Madman's eyes are barely open.

John Phillips: "He kicked out!"

Mark Bravo: "Ross knows."

John Phillips: "You keep saying that."

Mark Bravo: "Because every time Madman gets up, Chris Ross learns something else."

Ross stands.

He walks to the corner.

Madman rolls onto his stomach.

Ross waits.

Mark Bravo: "He learned Madman can wrestle."

Madman pushes up.

Mark Bravo: "He learned Madman can fight."

Madman gets one knee underneath him.

Mark Bravo: "He learned Madman can hurt him."

Ross watches.

Mark Bravo: "Now he's learning how much it'll take to keep him down."

Madman stands.

Ross explodes out of the corner.

25 TO LIFE!

The cyclone kick connects.

Madman turns inside out.

Ross covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN'S FOOT FINDS THE BOTTOM ROPE!

The referee stops the count.

Ross looks down.

Madman's boot is barely touching the rope.

John Phillips: "HE FOUND THE ROPE!"

Mark Bravo: "By inches."

Ross grabs Madman's ankle.

Looks at the boot.

Then at Madman.

He pulls him away from the ropes.

Ross covers again.

ONE!

TWO!

MADMAN KICKS OUT!

Ross sits up.

The crowd is getting louder.

John Phillips: "And now Madman does it himself!"

Mark Bravo: "That rope bought him seconds. He used them."

Ross rises.

Madman rolls toward the corner.

Ross follows.

Madman tries pulling himself up.

Ross grabs him.

Madman fires a punch to the stomach.

Ross takes it.

Another.

Ross still holds him.

A third.

Ross loosens his grip.

Madman fires upward.

Forearm to the jaw.

Another.

Ross backs away.

Madman follows.

Ross swings.

Madman ducks.

Ross turns.

Madman jumps onto his back!

Ross reaches backward.

Madman grabs around the head and neck.

Ross tries throwing him off.

Madman hangs on.

Ross staggers.

Madman pulls him backward!

Ross goes down!

Madman rolls through with him!

Shoulders down!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS ESCAPES!

The crowd explodes.

Madman scrambles up.

Ross does too.

Madman charges.

Ross catches him.

Madman twists free!

Ross turns.

Madman catches him with a kick!

Ross staggers.

Madman runs.

He comes back with everything he has!

Ross goes down!

Madman immediately covers!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

Madman rolls onto his back.

He stares at the lights.

The crowd is chanting now.

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

Madman's chest rises and falls.

He hears them.

John Phillips: "Listen to Los Angeles."

Mark Bravo: "They believe he can do it."

John Phillips: "Do you?"

Bravo doesn't answer immediately.

Madman turns onto his stomach.

Ross is doing the same.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "Right now? Yeah, I do."

Madman gets up first.

Ross is kneeling.

Madman looks around Crypto.com Arena.

The crowd gets louder.

Madman grabs Ross.

He tries pulling the champion upright.
Ross fires into the body.
Madman absorbs it.
Ross hits him again.
Madman refuses to release.
Ross throws another.
Madman answers with a forearm.
Ross answers.
Madman fires back.
Ross swings.
Madman ducks.
Ross turns.
Madman catches him.
He takes Ross down again!
Madman immediately reaches for the same submission!
The building ERUPTS.
Ross realizes it.
He fights desperately before Madman can secure it.
John Phillips: "HE'S GOING BACK TO IT!"
Madman almost has the position.
Ross rolls.
Madman follows.
Ross kicks free!
Madman falls backward.
Ross scrambles away.
Both men get up.
Ross charges.
Madman sidesteps!
Ross hits the ropes.
Madman catches him coming back!
He takes Ross down!
Another cover!
ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS KICKS OUT!

Madman doesn't stop.

He grabs Ross again.

Ross fights him.

Madman hangs on.

Ross fires a forearm.

Madman absorbs it.

Madman answers.

Ross rocks backward.

Madman hits another.

Ross reaches the ropes.

Madman charges.

Ross sends him over!

Madman lands on the apron!

Ross doesn't realize it.

He turns.

Madman springboards back toward him—

ROSS CATCHES HIM IN MID-AIR!

The crowd gasps.

Ross has Madman.

Madman's eyes go wide.

Ross adjusts his grip.

Madman begins throwing elbows.

One.

Two.

Three.

Ross staggers but refuses to release him.

Madman throws another.

Ross turns.

Madman realizes what's coming.

He fights harder.

Ross muscles him into position.

John Phillips: "Madman is fighting for his life here!"

Madman throws another elbow.

Ross's knees buckle.

Madman almost gets free.

Ross roars.

He lifts.

Madman slips out!

He lands behind Ross!

Ross turns—

Madman catches him!

ROSS GOES DOWN!

Madman hooks both legs!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE—

NO!

ROSS ESCAPES AT THE LAST POSSIBLE INSTANT!

Crypto.com Arena comes unglued.

Madman sits frozen.

The official holds up two fingers.

Madman looks at him.

Looks at Ross.

Looks back at the official.

Two.

John Phillips: "I THOUGHT THAT WAS IT!"

Mark Bravo: "So did Madman!"

John Phillips: "So did this entire arena!"

Madman drops his head.

Just for a moment.

Then he raises it.

No joke.

No disbelief.

No argument.

He gets back up.

The crowd rises with him.

John Phillips: "Look at Madman Szalinski."

Ross is still down.

Madman stands over him.

John Phillips: "He knows."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

John Phillips: "He knows he can beat Chris Ross."

Madman reaches down.

He pulls the UTA Champion upright.

Ross is unsteady.

Madman looks him in the eyes.

Madman Szalinski: "You wanted interested?"

Ross breathes heavily.

Madman pulls him closer.

Madman Szalinski: "Stay fucking interested."

Madman fires a forearm.

Ross staggers.

Another.

Ross nearly falls.

Madman hits the ropes.

Ross turns.

Madman comes flying back—

12 GAUGE!

Ross catches him with the ripcord headbutt out of nowhere!

Madman's body goes limp.

Ross collapses beside him.

Neither man moves.

John Phillips: "GOOD GOD!"

The crowd is roaring.

Ross lies on his back.

Madman lies face-down.

Mark Bravo: "Madman had him."

John Phillips: "He may still have him!"

Mark Bravo: "No, John."

Ross slowly rolls onto his side.

He looks toward Madman.

Mark Bravo: "Now we find out what Chris Ross is willing to do about it."

Chris Ross lies on his side.

Madman Szalinski lies face-down several feet away.

Neither man is moving.

The crowd is.

Thousands are standing throughout Crypto.com Arena.

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

Ross slowly pushes himself onto one elbow.

He looks toward Madman.

Madman doesn't move.

Ross crawls.

One arm reaches across Madman's back.

Ross rolls him over.

Covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

The crowd erupts.

Ross remains draped across him.

He closes his eyes.

Not disbelief.

Exhaustion.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski survives another 12 Gauge!"

Mark Bravo: "Look at Ross."

Ross rolls away.

Mark Bravo: "Madman wanted to know what happened when he got Chris Ross's full attention."

Ross sits up.

Mark Bravo: "We're past attention now."

Madman's fingers move.

Mark Bravo: "Chris Ross is trying to figure out how to beat this man."

Ross gets to his feet first.

Slowly.

His body shows the effects of the submission.

He rolls his shoulder.

Flexes his hand.

Madman crawls toward the ropes.

Ross watches him.

Madman grabs the bottom rope.

Then the middle.

Ross could attack.

He doesn't.

Madman gets one foot underneath himself.

Then the other.

He turns around.

Ross is waiting.

Chris Ross: "Come on."

Madman breathes heavily.

Ross motions toward himself.

Chris Ross: "You wanted me."

Madman stares at him.

Then pushes away from the ropes.

He walks forward.

Unsteady.

But forward.

John Phillips: "After everything that's happened, Madman Szalinski is still coming."

Mark Bravo: "Of course he is."

Madman reaches Ross.

Forearm.

Ross barely moves.
Madman fires another.
Ross rocks slightly.
Another.
Ross gives ground.
The crowd gets louder.
Madman fires again.
Again.
Again.
Ross reaches the ropes.
John Phillips: "Madman has Ross backing up!"
Madman keeps swinging.
Ross covers.
Madman attacks the body.
Left.
Right.
Forearm upstairs.
Ross staggers along the ropes.
Madman follows.
Ross suddenly grabs him.
Madman fights free.
Kick to the knee!
Ross drops.
Madman runs.
He rebounds.
Ross rises—
Madman catches him across the head!
Ross goes down!
The building erupts.
Madman falls too.
John Phillips: "HE GOT HIM!"
Madman crawls toward Ross.
Ross is on his back.

Madman reaches him.

COVER!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

Madman immediately grabs him.

John Phillips: "Madman isn't stopping!"

He tries turning Ross over.

Going back to the submission.

Ross recognizes it immediately.

He rolls toward the ropes.

Madman follows.

Ross kicks at him.

Madman catches the leg.

Ross kicks again with the other foot.

Madman stumbles.

Ross rolls underneath the bottom rope.

Madman reaches after him.

Ross drops to the floor.

Mark Bravo: "Look at that."

John Phillips: "Chris Ross just left the ring."

Mark Bravo: "Because Madman had an answer."

Ross stands outside.

Madman looks at him from inside.

Ross takes a breath.

Madman doesn't give him another.

Madman hits the ropes.

John Phillips: "MADMAN—"

Madman dives through the ropes!

ROSS CATCHES HIM!

Madman's body stops in midair.

Ross turns.

And DRIVES Madman spine-first into the ring apron.

The crowd groans.

Madman crumples to the floor.

Mark Bravo: "That's the difference."

Ross leans against the apron.

Breathing hard.

Mark Bravo: "Madman has had to be almost perfect. Ross gets one opening and he can change the entire match."

Ross looks down at Madman.

The official begins counting.

Ross grabs Madman.

He rolls him into the ring.

John Phillips: "Ross could have taken the countout."

Mark Bravo: "That's not what he wants."

Ross slides inside.

Madman crawls away.

Ross grabs an ankle.

Madman kicks him away.

Ross comes back.

Madman kicks again.

Ross catches the leg.

Madman uses the other foot to kick Ross directly in the face.

Ross releases.

Madman scrambles up.

Ross charges.

Madman moves!

Ross hits the corner.

Madman catches him from behind!

ROLL-UP!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

ROSS ESCAPES!

Both men scramble to their feet.

Madman charges.

10-71!

NO!

Madman ducks!

Ross spins around.

Madman catches him!

He takes Ross down!

THE SUBMISSION!

Crypto.com Arena EXPLODES.

John Phillips: "HE HAS IT AGAIN!"

Madman tries to secure the hold completely.

Ross thrashes.

Madman adjusts.

Ross knows exactly what happened last time.

He refuses to let Madman settle.

Ross rolls.

Madman rolls with him.

Ross rolls again.

Madman hangs on.

Mark Bravo: "Madman needs to get his weight set!"

Ross reaches backward.

Madman pulls.

Ross reaches again.

His hand finds Madman's head.

Ross claws for leverage.

Madman refuses to release.

Ross gets a knee underneath himself.

Madman pulls harder.

Ross suddenly throws his body sideways.

Madman's shoulders hit the canvas!

ONE!

TWO!

Madman releases the hold to escape!

Both men roll apart.

John Phillips: "Ross used the pin!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the adjustment!"

John Phillips: "Madman nearly submitted him earlier!"

Mark Bravo: "So Ross made sure he never got the same hold the same way twice."

Madman gets up.

Ross gets up.

They charge simultaneously.

Ross swings.

Madman ducks.

Madman rebounds.

Ross turns.

Madman jumps—

Ross catches him.

SPINEBUSTER!

Madman is planted.

Ross doesn't cover.

He gets up.

Madman rolls onto his stomach.

Ross grabs him.

Pulls him up.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Madman folds.

Ross keeps the waist.

Another.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Ross still doesn't release.

John Phillips: "Enough!"

Mark Bravo: "Not to Ross."

Ross pulls Madman up again.

Madman's legs drag beneath him.

Ross lifts.

Madman throws an elbow backward!

Ross holds on.
Another elbow!
Ross loosens his grip.
A third!
Madman gets free!
He turns.
Ross swings.
Madman ducks.
Madman catches him with a forearm.
Another.
Another.
Ross fires back.
Madman absorbs it.
He screams.
And hits Ross again.
John Phillips: "MADMAN IS STILL FIGHTING!"
Ross hits him.
Madman hits Ross.
Ross.
Madman.
Ross.
Madman.
Ross staggers.
Madman staggers.
They collide forehead-to-forehead.
Neither gives.
Mark Bravo: "This isn't about the weird shit anymore."
Madman fires.
Ross fires.
Mark Bravo: "This isn't about getting somebody's attention."
Madman hits him again.
Mark Bravo: "This is two men fighting over the UTA Championship."
Ross throws a forearm.

Madman ducks.

Madman fires back.

Ross reels.

Madman hits the ropes.

He comes back—

25 TO LIFE!

Ross catches Madman with the cyclone kick.

Madman drops.

Ross drops too.

The crowd groans.

Ross crawls toward Madman.

He stops.

Looks at him.

Then shakes his head.

Ross doesn't cover.

John Phillips: "Why isn't Ross covering him?!"

Mark Bravo: "Because Ross doesn't think it's enough."

Ross pulls himself upright.

Madman is motionless.

Ross grabs him by the wrist.

Pulls.

Madman comes forward.

12 GAUGE!

The ripcord headbutt connects.

Madman collapses again.

Ross still doesn't cover.

The crowd boos.

John Phillips: "Now cover him!"

Mark Bravo: "John."

Ross stands over Madman.

Mark Bravo: "Remember what Ross told him."

Ross bends down.

Grabs Madman by the head.

Mark Bravo: "This was never about three seconds."

Ross pulls Madman upright.

Madman can barely stand.

Ross positions him.

The crowd realizes what's coming.

John Phillips: "No."

Ross sets him.

John Phillips: "WELCOME TO HARRISBURG!"

Ross drives Madman's face into the canvas with the curb stomp.

Madman goes limp.

Ross rolls him over.

Covers.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MADMAN'S SHOULDER MOVES!

But not enough.

Not in time.

THREE!

The bell rings.

For a moment, the crowd doesn't quite process it.

Then the arena erupts into a mixture of cheers, boos, and applause.

Ross rolls off Madman.

He lies beside him.

Both men staring toward the lights.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross retains the UTA Championship."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

Ross's music doesn't immediately play.

John Phillips: "But my God, what did it take?"

The official kneels beside Madman.

Ross turns his head.

Looks at the challenger.

Mark Bravo: "Everything."

The crowd begins chanting again.

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

Madman hasn't moved yet.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski wanted this match."

Ross slowly sits up.

John Phillips: "He wanted Chris Ross to see him as a threat."

Ross looks toward the championship being brought into the ring.

John Phillips: "There can be absolutely no question anymore."

The official hands Ross the UTA Championship.

Ross takes it.

But doesn't stand.

Mark Bravo: "No."

Madman finally moves.

One hand reaches toward his face.

The crowd responds immediately.

Mark Bravo: "Madman didn't win the championship."

Ross watches him.

Mark Bravo: "But Chris Ross is never going to forget he had to beat him."

Ross gets to his feet.

The official raises his arm.

John Phillips: "What a championship match."

Ross pulls his arm away.

He looks toward ringside.

Then toward Madman.

Ross steps through the ropes.

John Phillips: "Where is he going?"

Ross drops to the floor.

He walks toward the timekeeper's area.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, no."

Ross grabs a steel chair.

John Phillips: "The match is over, Ross!"

Ross folds the chair.
Slides it underneath the bottom rope.
Then slides back into the ring.
Madman remains on the canvas.
The crowd begins booing.
Ross picks up the chair.
The official moves toward him.
Ross looks at the official.
Nothing else.
The official stops.
John Phillips: "Come on."
Ross walks toward Madman.
Madman rolls onto his side.
Ross opens the chair.
Sets it down.
And sits.
The crowd quiets.
Ross places the UTA Championship across his lap.
He leans forward.
Forearms resting on the championship.
Madman slowly turns his head.
He sees Ross sitting there.
Ross looks directly at him.
No smile.
No celebration.
Just the Reaper looking at the man who spent weeks demanding that he turn around.
Ross speaks.
Chris Ross: "Remember..."
Madman breathes heavily.
Chris Ross: "You asked for this."
Ross looks down at Madman.
Then at the championship across his lap.
Back to Madman.

Chris Ross: "Now you're just another body in my cemetery."

The crowd reacts.

Ross leans back in the chair.

Madman looks at him.

He doesn't answer.

He doesn't need to.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross is still UTA Champion."

Ross finally stands.

He folds the chair.

Sets it aside.

No attack.

No cheap shot.

The point has already been made.

Ross raises the UTA Championship.

Mark Bravo: "But that wasn't another body."

Ross looks toward Madman one final time.

Mark Bravo: "Not tonight."

Ross steps through the ropes.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski challenged the Reaper. He took Chris Ross closer to the edge than anyone expected. For stretches of this match, this entire arena believed we were watching a new UTA Champion being crowned."

Ross begins walking up the aisle.

Inside the ring, Madman slowly pushes himself onto an elbow.

The crowd cheers.

John Phillips: "But Chris Ross survived."

Madman reaches his knees.

John Phillips: "And when the opportunity finally came..."

Ross reaches the stage.

He turns.

Madman is now sitting against the bottom rope.

Ross raises the championship.

John Phillips: "...the Reaper finished the job."

Madman looks toward Ross.

Ross looks back.

No smile from either man.

Mark Bravo: "Madman wanted Chris Ross to see him."

Ross disappears through the curtain.

The camera returns to Madman.

The chant begins again.

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

MAD-MAN!

Madman grabs the middle rope.

Pulls himself higher.

Mark Bravo: "He sees him now."

Madman finally reaches his feet.

The crowd rises with him.

He stands in the middle of the ring.

Battered.

Exhausted.

Without the UTA Championship.

But standing.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross promised us that what mattered wasn't the three-count."

Madman looks around Crypto.com Arena.

John Phillips: "He said what mattered was who could walk out on his own two feet."

Madman takes one step.

Then another.

The crowd gets louder.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski is walking."

Madman reaches the ropes.

He stops.

Looks back toward the entrance where Ross disappeared.

Then shakes his head.

A battered little smile appears.

Madman Szalinski: "Inconclusive."

The crowd erupts.

Mark Bravo: "God damn, son."

Madman steps through the ropes as the ovation continues.

One Thing left

Segment

The broadcast returns to ringside.

Crypto.com Arena is still buzzing after the UTA Championship war between Chris Ross and Madman Szalinski.

John Phillips and Mark Bravo sit behind the commentary desk.

For a moment, neither man speaks.

John Phillips: "What a night."

Mark Bravo: "And it's not over."

Phillips nods.

John Phillips: "Bianca Page became the new UTA Hardcore Champion."

A still image appears of Bianca holding the championship.

John Phillips: "Yoshii regained the United States Championship."

Yoshii holding the title.

John Phillips: "Samuel Scythe survived Savior Hawkins and remains Fighting Champion."

Scythe raising the Fighting Championship.

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Junior defeated Bobby Dean to become the new International Champion."

Eric Dane Jr. holding the International Championship.

John Phillips: "And moments ago, Chris Ross went through hell with Madman Szalinski and emerged still UTA Champion."

The final image is Ross raising the UTA Championship.

It fades.

Mark Bravo: "Five championship matches."

John Phillips: "Five championship matches are behind us."

The arena lights begin changing.

The Ring King crown appears on the video wall.

John Phillips: "And now there is only one thing left."

The tournament bracket fills the screen.

Sixteen names.

Fourteen crossed out.

Two remain.

MIKEY UNLIKELY

MIKE BEST

The crowd erupts.

John Phillips: "Sixteen competitors entered the 2026 Ring King Tournament."

Mark Bravo: "Champions. Hall of Famers. Former champions. People trying to become something and people who already think they're everything."

John Phillips: "We went from sixteen to eight."

The bracket contracts.

John Phillips: "Eight to four."

Again.

John Phillips: "Four to two."

Only Mikey and Mike remain.

John Phillips: "Before this night ends, one of these men will be crowned the 2026 Ring King and leave Los Angeles with a guaranteed opportunity at the UTA Championship."

Mark Bravo: "Chris Ross just survived Madman Szalinski."

Bravo looks toward the camera.

Mark Bravo: "One of these two men is about to earn the right to come looking for him."

The graphic remains.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

John Phillips: "Katy Winters is standing by with our first finalist."

Three More

Segment

Backstage, Katy Winters stands beside Mikey Unlikely.

The WrestleZone Championship rests over Mikey's shoulder.

He's already dressed for the main event.

No champagne.

No entourage.

No elaborate production.

Although the jacket probably costs more than Katy's car.

Katy Winters: "Mikey, we're moments away from the Ring King Final. You've already fought through Chris Ross, Samuel Scythe, and Sol Azteca to get here. Now there's only Mike Best."

Mikey considers that.

Mikey Unlikely: "Only Mike Best."

He smiles.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's a fun sentence."

Katy smiles slightly.

Mikey Unlikely: "You know what everybody remembers about Mikey Unlikely?"

He gestures toward himself.

Mikey Unlikely: "This."

He motions toward the jacket.

Mikey Unlikely: "The money. The movies. The music. The Hollywood Bruvs. The parties. The suits. The incredibly tasteful facial hair."

Katy raises an eyebrow.

Mikey Unlikely: "Especially the facial hair."

A beat.

The smile fades slightly.

Mikey Unlikely: "You know what people forget?"

Mikey taps the WrestleZone Championship.

Mikey Unlikely: "I win."

Silence.

Mikey Unlikely: "Chris Ross didn't beat me."

Mikey Unlikely: "Samuel Scythe didn't beat me."

Mikey Unlikely: "Sol Azteca didn't beat me."

Mikey looks toward Katy.

Mikey Unlikely: "And Sol came damn close."

He nods.

Mikey Unlikely: "She had me."

A beat.

Mikey Unlikely: "Almost."

Mikey holds up three fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "Then I found three seconds."

Katy looks toward the fingers.

Katy Winters: "And Mike Best?"

Mikey lowers his hand.

He thinks about it.

Mikey Unlikely: "Mike Best doesn't give you three seconds."

That hangs there.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's the problem."

Mikey adjusts the championship on his shoulder.

Mikey Unlikely: "He makes you fight his fight. He makes you uncomfortable. He makes you tired. He makes you angry. Then when your knees hit the mat..."

Mikey snaps his fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "Goodnight."

Katy Winters: "I KNEED A HERO."

Mikey nods.

Mikey Unlikely: "Hasn't been kicked out of."

Another pause.

Mikey Unlikely: "So I have a revolutionary strategy."

Katy waits.

Mikey Unlikely: "Don't get hit with it."

Katy laughs.

Mikey doesn't.

Not this time.

Mikey Unlikely: "I'm serious."

He looks directly into the camera.

Mikey Unlikely: "I've spent this entire tournament hearing about what everybody else does better than me."

Mikey Unlikely: "Ross is more dangerous."

Mikey Unlikely: "Scythe is more violent."

Mikey Unlikely: "Sol is faster."

Mikey shrugs.

Mikey Unlikely: "Cool."

He pats the championship.

Mikey Unlikely: "I'm still here."

The crowd watching on the arena screen cheers.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's what fifteen years of doing this teaches you."

He holds up three fingers again.

Mikey Unlikely: "I don't need to be better than Mike Best for thirty minutes."

A grin.

Mikey Unlikely: "I don't need to be better than him for twenty."

Mikey Unlikely: "I don't even need to be better than him for ten."

Mikey lowers two fingers.

Three become one.

Mikey Unlikely: "I just need my moment."

He looks toward the direction of gorilla.

Mikey Unlikely: "And when it comes..."

Mikey looks back into the camera.

Mikey Unlikely: "The World's Greatest Entertainer is going to become the 2026 Ring King."

Mikey starts to leave.

Katy stops him with one final question.

Katy Winters: "Mikey."

He turns.

Katy Winters: "Three seconds?"

Mikey smiles.

Three fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's all I need."

He walks away.

Clear the Path

Segment

Backstage, Maxwell Jett stands watching a monitor.

On the screen, Chris Ross is making his way through the curtain, the UTA Championship still in his possession after surviving Madman Szalinski.

Jacoby Jacobs and Darian Darrington stand nearby.

Jacoby looks from the monitor to Maxwell.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Why didn't we take Ross out?"

Darian nods.

Darian Darrington: "Seriously. He just went through hell. If there was ever a time..."

Maxwell doesn't look away from the monitor.

Maxwell Jett: "I know."

Jacoby waits.

Maxwell finally looks at them.

Maxwell Jett: "That's exactly what he expected."

Jacoby and Darian exchange a glance.

Maxwell Jett: "No."

Maxwell turns away from the monitor.

Maxwell Jett: "Whoever wins Ring King tonight is guaranteed a shot at the UTA Championship."

Now they understand where he's going.

Maxwell Jett: "So why waste our time taking out the champion?"

A grin begins forming across Jacoby's face.

Maxwell Jett: "We take out the guy with the guaranteed shot."

Darian smiles.

Maxwell Jett: "That way..."

Maxwell looks back toward the monitor.

Chris Ross has disappeared from view.

Maxwell Jett: "...there's nobody standing in the way."

Jacoby laughs.

Jacoby Jacobs: "That's why you're the boss."

Darian Darrington: "I love it."

Maxwell smiles.

Jacoby thinks for a moment.

Jacoby Jacobs: "Well, what about—"

Maxwell Jett: "Don't."

Jacoby stops.

Maxwell's expression changes immediately.

Maxwell Jett: "You don't say his name."

Silence.

Darian glances toward Jacoby.

Maxwell straightens his jacket.

Maxwell Jett: "Trust me."

He starts toward the door.

Maxwell Jett: "He knows what to do."

Maxwell opens it.

Then pauses.

Maxwell Jett: "And when."

Maxwell exits.

Jacoby and Darian exchange one final look before following.

Results

Segment

Elsewhere backstage.

Mike Best sits alone.

UTA Hall of Fame ring on his hand.

His wrists are taped.

His gear is on.

Melissa Cartwright stands nearby.

Mike isn't pacing.

He isn't watching a monitor.

He isn't psyching himself up.

He looks like a man waiting for somebody to tell him it's time to go to work.

Melissa Cartwright: "Mike."

Best looks up.

Melissa Cartwright: "A few minutes ago, Mikey Unlikely said he doesn't need to be better than you for thirty minutes. He just needs three seconds."

Mike stares at her.

Then laughs once.

Not because it's particularly funny.

Mike Best: "Of course he did."

Mike stands.

Mike Best: "That's Mikey."

He adjusts the tape around his wrist.

Mike Best: "And here's the thing."

Mike looks toward Melissa.

Mike Best: "He's right."

A beat.

Mike Best: "That's what makes him dangerous."

Melissa listens.

Mike Best: "Everybody sees the celebrity bullshit. Everybody sees the money. Everybody sees the jokes. Everybody sees the guy who walks into a building like somebody laid down a red carpet five minutes before he got there."

Mike shrugs.

Mike Best: "And then he beats you."

Mike steps closer.

Mike Best: "He beat Samuel Scythe."

Mike Best: "He beat Sol Azteca."

Mike Best: "He's standing in the fucking final."

Mike shakes his head.

Mike Best: "I'm not stupid enough to pretend that's an accident."

Melissa Cartwright: "So what makes tonight different?"

Mike looks at her.

Mike Best: "Me."

No smile.

Mike Best: "Everybody wants to make this complicated."

He holds up the Hall of Fame hand.

Mike Best: "Hall of Famer."

Another finger.

Mike Best: "Mike Best returning to UTA."

Another.

Mike Best: "Two guys who've been doing this forever."

Mike drops the hand.

Mike Best: "Fuck all of that."

He looks directly into the camera.

Mike Best: "I'm not here for nostalgia."

Mike Best: "I'm not here because I miss the applause."

Mike Best: "I'm not here so somebody can make a video package about how long I've been wrestling."

A beat.

Mike Best: "I'm here for results."

Mike points toward the arena.

Mike Best: "Valkyrie Knox."

Mike Best: "Result."

Mike Best: "Bobby Dean."

Mike Best: "Result."

Mike Best: "Marie Van Claudio."

Mike Best: "Result."

Mike Best: "Kirsty McKinney."

Pause.

Mike Best: "Result."

Mike looks toward Melissa.

Mike Best: "That's why I'm here."

Melissa Cartwright: "Mikey says all he needs is a moment."

Mike nods.

Mike Best: "Then he'd better fucking find it."

Mike takes a step toward the camera.

Mike Best: "Because Mikey's right about something else."

A pause.

Mike Best: "I don't give you three seconds."

Mike's expression hardens.

Mike Best: "I take them."

Melissa lets that sit.

Melissa Cartwright: "And if you win tonight, you're Ring King and guaranteed a future opportunity at the UTA Championship."

Mike glances toward the arena.

Mike Best: "When."

Melissa pauses.

Melissa Cartwright: "When?"

Mike looks back.

Mike Best: "You said if."

A small grin finally appears.

Mike Best: "When I win tonight."

Mike starts walking away.

Melissa calls after him.

Melissa Cartwright: "Mike! One last question."

He stops.

Melissa Cartwright: "What happens when Mikey finds his moment?"

Mike looks over his shoulder.

Mike Best: "Results."

And he's gone.

Sixteen Became Two

Segment

Black.

A crown slowly materializes.

Not on a head.

Floating against darkness.

A voice begins.

Narrator: "Sixteen."

Sixteen names explode onto the screen.

CHRIS ROSS.

SAMUEL SCYTHER.

BOBBY DEAN.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

EMILY HIGHTOWER.

HAKURYU.

KIRSTY McKINNEY.

BIANCA PAGE.

LINDSEY LOTHARIO.

MIKE BEST.

MAXWELL JETT.

SELINA SANTORINO.

SOL AZTECA.

YOSHII.

MADMAN SZALINSKI.

MARIE VAN CLAUDIO.

Rapid cuts.

Qualifying matches.

Celebrations.

Disappointments.

The bracket filling.

Narrator: "Champions."

Ross.

Scythe.

Bobby.

Mikey.

Emily.

Hakuryu.

Narrator: "Challengers."

Mike Best.

Sol Azteca.

Kirsty McKinney.

Bianca Page.

Maxwell Jett.

Marie Van Claudio.

Narrator: "Sixteen paths."

The first round begins disappearing in flashes.

Narrator: "Eight survived."

Eight names remain.

Then four.

Narrator: "Four remained."

SOL AZTECA.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

KIRSTY McKINNEY.

MIKE BEST.

The music slows.

Sol Azteca and Mikey Unlikely.

Technical exchanges.

Speed.

Counters.

Sol pushing Mikey.

Mikey searching.

Waiting.

Then—

The opening.

The stacked pin.

Three.

Mikey raises three fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "That's all I needed."

Black.

Mike Best and Kirsty McKinney.

Kirsty wrestling him.

Controlling him.

The Shear Cradle.

The Pitty Choke.

Mike being forced to adapt.

Kirsty countering.

Mike surviving.

Then—

I KNEED A HERO!

Three.

Kirsty McKinney: "That Mike Best was better tonight."

Black.

Narrator: "Sixteen became two."

The screen splits.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

The music begins building again.

Now Mikey's entire tournament flashes by.

Chris Ross.

Chaos outside the ring.

The count.

Mikey advancing.

Samuel Scythe.

Violence.

Pressure.

The inside cradle.

Three.

Sol Azteca.

The opening.

Three.

Narrator: "One man has survived."

Mikey raises the WrestleZone Championship.

Narrator: "Adapted."

Mikey slips away from Scythe.

Narrator: "Waited."

Sol attacks.

Mikey watches.

Narrator: "And when the moment appeared..."

ONE.

TWO.

THREE.

Narrator: "...he took three seconds."

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST ENTERTAINER.

WRESTLEZONE CHAMPION.

The image disappears.

Now Mike.

Valkyrie Knoxx.

Mike advances.

Bobby Dean.

I KNEED A HERO!

Three.

Mike helping Bobby back to his feet.

Mike Best: "Don't lose that again."

Marie Van Claudio.

Marie nearly submitting him.

Mike surviving.

Mike winning.

Mike Best: "You were right about one thing. You didn't need them. Until you thought you did."

Kirsty McKinney.

Wrestling.

Submissions.

Counters.

Mike adapting.

I KNEED A HERO!

Three.

Narrator: "The other man hasn't waited for opportunity."

Mike Best stands victorious.

Narrator: "He has forced it."

MIKE BEST.

THE SON OF GOD.

UTA HALL OF FAMER.

Black.

A heartbeat.

Mikey appears.

Mikey Unlikely: "Three seconds."

Black.

Mike.

Mike Best: "Results."

Black.

Mikey.

Three fingers.

Mike.

His Hall of Fame ring.

Mikey.

The WrestleZone Championship.

Mike.

Walking toward the ring.

The music swells.

Footage from Council Bluffs.

Mikey Unlikely stands on the stage.

Mike Best stands inside the ring.

They see each other.

No words.

No jokes.

No threats.

Just recognition.

The image freezes.

Narrator: "One finds the moment."

Mikey's side of the image illuminates.

Narrator: "One forces the result."

Mike's side.

The screen goes black.

SIXTEEN.

Beat.

EIGHT.

Beat.

FOUR.

Beat.

TWO.

Longer pause.

The crown appears.

ONE.

The Ring King logo explodes onto the screen.

RING KING 2026

TOURNAMENT FINAL

MIKEY UNLIKELY

vs.

MIKE BEST

Narrator: "Who will be crowned Ring King?"

Black.

One final line appears.

THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE.

The video ends.

Crypto.com Arena erupts.

We return to ringside.

John Phillips doesn't immediately speak.

He lets the crowd carry it.

Then—

John Phillips: "Sixteen became two."

Mark Bravo: "Now two become one."

The Ring King crown sits on display at ringside.

John Phillips: "The winner becomes the 2026 Ring King and earns a guaranteed opportunity at the UTA Championship."

The camera pushes toward the entrance.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely."

A beat.

John Phillips: "Mike Best."

The lights begin to fall.

Mark Bravo: "No more brackets."

Darkness begins consuming the stage.

Mark Bravo: "No more next round."

The crowd rises.

Mark Bravo: "Win."

A beat.

Mark Bravo: "That's it."

Mikey Unlikely vs. Mike Best

Match

The lights inside Crypto.com Arena continue to fall.

The Ring King crown remains illuminated at ringside.

Sixteen started.

Two remain.

For several seconds, there is nothing but darkness and the growing roar of more than eighteen thousand people who know exactly what comes next.

Then the opening of "Blunt Blowin" by Lil Wayne hits.

The reaction is immediate.

The stage explodes with light.

John Phillips: "Here we go."

Mikey Unlikely steps through the curtain.

The WrestleZone Championship rests over his shoulder.

He stops at the top of the stage.

And for once...

Mikey doesn't immediately play to the camera.

He looks out across Crypto.com Arena.

Thousands of people on their feet.

The Ring King logo towering behind him.

The crown waiting beside the ring.

Mikey slowly looks from one side of the building to the other.

Then he exhales.

Mark Bravo: "You know, John, there have been a lot of different versions of Mikey Unlikely."

John Phillips: "There certainly have."

Mark Bravo: "Musician. Movie star. Millionaire. Hollywood Bruv. Walking ego with a bank account."

Mikey finally cracks a smile.

He raises the WrestleZone Championship high above his head.

The crowd gets louder.

Mark Bravo: "But people make a mistake when they let all of that become the story."

Mikey lowers the championship and begins walking down the ramp.

Mark Bravo: "Because eventually, you've gotta get in the ring with him."

John Phillips: "And that's what fifteen other people in this tournament have learned."

Mikey reaches toward the fans lining the aisle, slapping hands as he goes.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely entered this tournament as the WrestleZone Champion. He entered talking about the Mikey Unlikely Victory Tour. And every round, the question has been the same."

Mikey looks toward the ring.

John Phillips: "When does the tour end?"

A graphic appears briefly on screen.

RING KING 2026

MIKEY UNLIKELY

ROUND ONE — CHRIS ROSS

ROUND TWO — SAMUEL SCYTHE

SEMIFINAL — SOL AZTECA

Mark Bravo: "Not against Chris Ross."

Mikey continues down the aisle.

Mark Bravo: "Not against Samuel Scythe."

He reaches ringside.

Mark Bravo: "Not against Sol Azteca."

Mikey stops.

He looks into the ring.

Mark Bravo: "So now there's one man left who can end it."

Mikey glances toward the entrance stage.

Mike Best isn't there yet.

John Phillips: "And let's be precise about Mikey's road here. He didn't pin Chris Ross in the opening round. Madman Szalinski attacked Ross, and Mikey advanced by countout through circumstances he didn't create."

Mikey walks around the ring.

John Phillips: "Against Samuel Scythe, he survived long enough to find the inside cradle."

Mikey reaches the crown.

He stops beside it.

John Phillips: "Against Sol Azteca, there was no outside help. No excuse. No controversy. Sol pushed him to his limit, Mikey found one opening, stacked her shoulders down, and took three seconds."

Mikey stares at the crown.

He doesn't touch it.

Mark Bravo: "That's the whole tournament right there."

Mikey holds up three fingers.

The crowd responds immediately.

Mark Bravo: "Three seconds."

Mikey lowers his hand.

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight he told Katy Winters that's all he needs."

Mark Bravo: "And I believe him."

Mikey turns away from the crown and climbs the ring steps.

Mark Bravo: "But here's the problem."

He steps onto the apron.

Mark Bravo: "Mike Best knows it too."

Mikey wipes his boots against the apron before stepping through the ropes.

John Phillips: "That may be the most fascinating part of this final. Neither man is walking into this match believing the other is a joke."

Mikey moves toward the center of the ring.

John Phillips: "Mikey knows exactly what Mike Best can do."

He unfastens the WrestleZone Championship.

John Phillips: "And Mike Best told Melissa Cartwright earlier tonight that anybody who thinks Mikey Unlikely accidentally reached this final is a fool."

Mikey looks down at the championship in his hands.

Then raises it overhead.

Another huge reaction.

Mark Bravo: "That's important."

Mikey turns slowly, displaying the championship to every side of the building.

Mark Bravo: "No underdog story."

Another side.

Mark Bravo: "No old-timer story."

Another.

Mark Bravo: "No 'can he still do it' story."

Mikey completes the turn.

Mark Bravo: "Two men at the top of their game."

Mikey lowers the WrestleZone Championship.

Mark Bravo: "One crown."

Mikey hands his championship through the ropes.

He removes his entrance jacket.

For the first time since arriving on stage, the showmanship begins to disappear.

Mikey rolls his neck.

Stretches his shoulders.

Tests the ropes.

Then settles into his corner.

His music continues for several more seconds.

Mikey looks back toward the entrance.

No smile now.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely said he doesn't have to be better than Mike Best for thirty minutes."

The music begins fading.

John Phillips: "He doesn't have to be better for twenty."

The arena begins descending into darkness again.

John Phillips: "He doesn't have to be better for ten."

Mikey leans forward against the ropes.

Waiting.

John Phillips: "He just has to find his moment."

The last traces of Mikey's entrance music disappear.

The building buzzes.

Mikey's eyes remain locked on the stage.

Mark Bravo: "Then he'd better find it before the Son of GOD finds him."

Black.

Darkness.

Mikey Unlikely waits inside the ring.

The WrestleZone Champion leans against the ropes, staring toward the entrance.

Crypto.com Arena buzzes with anticipation.

Then—

Mike Best's music hits.

The reaction rolls through the building.

Mikey pushes away from the ropes.

His eyes remain fixed on the stage.

Mike Best steps through the curtain.

No championship around his waist.

No entourage surrounding him.

Just the UTA Hall of Famer standing beneath the lights.

Mike looks toward the ring.

Directly at Mikey.

That's it.

John Phillips: "Mike Best."

Mike starts down the ramp.

John Phillips: "One of the most accomplished men ever to compete in the United Toughness Alliance."

Mark Bravo: "And if you told him that before this match, he'd probably tell you he doesn't give a shit."

Mike continues toward the ring.

John Phillips: "That's been his message throughout this tournament."

A graphic appears.

RING KING 2026

MIKE BEST

QUALIFIER — VALKYRIE KNOXX

ROUND ONE — BOBBY DEAN

ROUND TWO — MARIE VAN CLAUDIO

SEMIFINAL — KIRSTY McKINNEY

John Phillips: "Valkyrie Knoxx."

Mike keeps walking.

John Phillips: "Bobby Dean."

Closer.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio."

Mike reaches ringside.

John Phillips: "Kirsty McKinney."

Mike stops.

He looks into the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Results."

Mikey stands in the opposite corner.

Neither man looks away.

Mark Bravo: "That's it."

Mike turns toward the Ring King crown.

For the first time, his attention leaves Mikey.

He looks at it.

No touching.

No posing beside it.

No admiring it.

Mike simply looks.

Then turns away.

John Phillips: "That crown represents something enormous. The winner tonight becomes Ring King and earns a guaranteed opportunity at Chris Ross and the UTA Championship."

Mark Bravo: "Mike doesn't want the symbol."

Mike climbs the steps.

Mark Bravo: "He wants what comes with it."

Mike steps through the ropes.

Mikey watches him enter.

Mike walks to his corner.

Then turns.

And now they're finally standing inside the same ring.

MIKEY UNLIKELY.

MIKE BEST.

The crowd grows louder.

John Phillips: "Think about what Mike Best has had to solve just to get here."

Mike stretches against the ropes.

John Phillips: "Bobby Dean forced him to deal with size."

Mike rolls his shoulders.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio pushed him into deep water."

He adjusts the tape around his wrist.

John Phillips: "And Kirsty McKinney dragged him into an amateur wrestling match and nearly submitted him."

Mark Bravo: "And every time somebody presented Mike Best with a different problem, he found a different answer."

Mike steps away from the corner.

Mark Bravo: "That's why this match is so damn interesting."

Mikey does the same.

Mark Bravo: "Because that's Mikey's whole thing too."

The two men begin slowly moving toward the center.

John Phillips: "Adaptability."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly."

Mike stops.

Mikey stops.

Several feet separate them.

Mark Bravo: "They just arrive at it differently."

The music fades.

The crowd fills the silence.

John Phillips: "Mikey waits for the mistake."

Mike looks at Mikey.

John Phillips: "Mike creates one."

Mikey looks back.

Mark Bravo: "Mikey finds three seconds."

Mike takes one step closer.

Mark Bravo: "Mike takes them."

Mikey takes one step closer too.

Now they're nearly nose-to-nose.

The crowd erupts.

Mike says something.

No microphone picks it up.

Mikey answers.

Mike smirks.

Mikey smirks back.

John Phillips: "And I want to emphasize something before we begin."

The official approaches.

John Phillips: "This isn't two men trying to prove they can still compete."

The official motions them apart.

Neither moves immediately.

John Phillips: "They already proved that."

The official gets between them.

John Phillips: "They proved it through an entire tournament."

Mike finally backs toward his corner.

Mikey does the same.

Mark Bravo: "Nobody handed either one of these guys a main event because of something they did ten years ago."

Mike rolls his neck.

Mark Bravo: "They earned this one in 2026."

The Ring King crown is shown again at ringside.

Then Chris Ross holding the UTA Championship earlier tonight appears briefly on the arena screen.

John Phillips: "And somewhere beyond tonight waits the Reaper of Harrisburg."

Mike looks toward the screen.

Mikey does too.

Chris Ross.

UTA Champion.

The image disappears.

Mike looks across the ring.

Mikey looks back.

Mark Bravo: "Forget Ross."

The official checks Mike.

Mark Bravo: "Forget the title shot."

The official checks Mikey.

Mark Bravo: "Forget tomorrow."

The crowd begins clapping rhythmically.

Mark Bravo: "Because one of these guys has to survive the other one first."

The official moves to the center.

Mikey crouches slightly.

Mike does the same.

John Phillips: "Mikey Unlikely."

The crowd cheers.

John Phillips: "Mike Best."

Another reaction.

John Phillips: "The final match of the 2026 Ring King Tournament."

Mike's eyes narrow.

Mikey bounces once on the balls of his feet.

John Phillips: "One match."

The official looks toward Mikey.

Then Mike.

John Phillips: "One winner."

The official signals.

John Phillips: "One Ring King."

The bell rings.

Neither man charges.

They circle.

Slowly.

Studying.

Mike feints forward.

Mikey doesn't bite.

Mikey changes direction.

Mike follows.

The crowd quiets enough that the movement of their boots across the canvas can almost be heard.

Mike raises one hand.

Mikey looks at it.

Then at Mike.

They move closer.

Mike reaches.

Mikey reaches.

And the 2026 Ring King Final begins.

Mike Best reaches.

Mikey Unlikely reaches.

Their hands meet.

Mike immediately catches the wrist.

Twist.

Mikey rolls forward with it.

Back to his feet.

Reverses.

Now Mike's wrist is trapped.

Mike looks down.

Then up at Mikey.

Mikey smiles.

Mike steps through.

Reverses again.

Mikey drops to one knee.

Mike increases the pressure.

Mikey rolls backward.

Kips up.

Turns through.

Breaks the grip.

Both men back away.

The crowd applauds.

John Phillips: "And there is our first little conversation."

Mark Bravo: "Neither one said anything."

John Phillips: "They didn't need to."

Mike nods once.

Mikey gives him a small shrug.

They circle again.

Collar-and-elbow tie-up.

Mike immediately changes levels.

Waistlock.

Mikey reaches down to peel the hands apart.

Mike takes him to the canvas.

Mike rides Mikey from behind.

Mikey tries to rise.

Mike shifts his weight and puts him right back down.

Mikey tries again.

Mike hooks the leg.

Mikey rolls.

Mike follows.

Mikey turns into him.

Mike catches the head.

Front facelock.

John Phillips: "This is where Mike Best is comfortable."

Mark Bravo: "And it's exactly where Mikey doesn't want to spend the whole night."

Mikey gets a knee underneath himself.

Mike keeps his weight over the neck.

Mikey rises.

Mike transitions.

Hammerlock.

Mikey reaches behind.

Can't get him.

Mike sweeps the leg.

Mikey goes down again.

Mike floats over.

Cover.

ONE!

Mikey immediately escapes.

Both men rise.

Mike steps toward him.

Mikey puts one finger up.

Mikey Unlikely: "One."

Mike stares at him.

Mikey holds up two more fingers.

Mikey Unlikely: "Need two more."

The crowd laughs.

Mike shakes his head.

Mark Bravo: "I knew he couldn't stay serious forever."

John Phillips: "That's not necessarily a joke."

Mark Bravo: "No. That's the annoying part."

Mike moves in again.

Mikey changes levels this time.

Mike sprawls.

Mikey expected it.

He slips around behind.

Waistlock.

Mike reaches back.

Mikey releases before Mike can secure the arm.

Dropkick!

Mike stumbles forward.

Mikey springs up.

Mike turns.

Another dropkick!

Mike hits the ropes.

Mikey charges.

Mike drops his shoulder.

Mikey goes over the top—

But lands on the apron.

Mike turns.

Mikey catches him with a forearm.

Mike staggers.

Mikey slingshots inside.

Mike moves.

Mikey lands on his feet.

Turns.

Mike swings.

Mikey ducks.

Hits the ropes.

Mike turns.

Mikey comes back fast.

Mike braces for impact—

Mikey stops.

Right in front of him.

Mike swings.

Mikey ducks again.

Schoolboy!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike kicks out!

Mikey is already moving.

Mike gets up.

Another cradle!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike escapes!

Mike scrambles up.

Mikey catches him again!

Inside cradle!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike powers free!

Both men jump to their feet.

Mikey backs away.

Three fingers.

The crowd erupts.

Mike looks considerably less amused.

John Phillips: "There it is."

Mark Bravo: "That's what Mike has to deal with."

John Phillips: "Mikey didn't hurt him."

Mark Bravo: "Didn't have to. He just showed Mike Best three different ways this match could disappear."

Mike walks forward.

Mikey circles.

Mike closes the distance.

Mikey keeps moving.

Mike feints high.

Mikey shifts.

Mike shoots low.

This time he gets both legs.

Mikey hits the canvas.

Mike immediately passes.

Mikey tries scrambling away.

Mike catches the waist.

Deadlift.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Mikey lands hard.

John Phillips: "And there's Mike's answer."

Mike keeps the waist.

Mikey grabs at his hands.
Mike pulls him up.
Mikey throws an elbow backward.
Mike absorbs it.
Another elbow.
Mike releases.
Mikey turns.
Mike catches him with a hard kick to the body.
Mikey folds.
Mike drives a knee upward.
Mikey falls backward into the ropes.
Mark Bravo: "Mikey wants motion. Mike wants contact."
Mike advances.
Mark Bravo: "That's the fight inside this match."
Mike grabs Mikey.
Hard forearm.
Mikey's head snaps backward.
Another.
Mike whips him across the ring.
Mikey rebounds.
Mike catches him.
BELLY-TO-BELLY SUPLEX!
Mikey hits hard.
Mike covers.
ONE!
TWO!
Mikey kicks out.
Mike doesn't argue.
He immediately grabs Mikey's arm.
Mikey recognizes the danger and rolls.
Mike follows.
Mikey reaches the ropes.
Mike releases immediately.

Mikey rolls outside.

Not hurt enough to stay down.

Just creating distance.

Mike watches from inside.

John Phillips: "Smart."

Mark Bravo: "Very."

Mikey walks along ringside.

Mark Bravo: "Somebody else might worry that leaving the ring makes them look weak."

Mikey stretches his neck.

Mark Bravo: "Mikey Unlikely couldn't give less of a shit how it looks."

John Phillips: "He cares whether it works."

Mark Bravo: "Exactly."

Mike walks toward the ropes.

He motions for Mikey to come back.

Mikey looks at him.

Then at the crowd.

Then back at Mike.

Mikey Unlikely: "You're very aggressive."

Mike sits on the middle rope.

He opens it for Mikey.

The crowd laughs.

Mike Best: "Come on, Hollywood."

Mikey points at himself.

Mikey Unlikely: "Me?"

Mike waits.

Mikey climbs onto the apron.

Mike continues holding the ropes open.

Mikey studies him.

Mark Bravo: "Absolutely not."

John Phillips: "You don't trust Mike?"

Mark Bravo: "Would you?"

Mikey starts stepping through.

Mike backs away.

Mikey pauses.

Looks surprised.

Then enters.

Mike gestures toward the center.

Mike Best: "Come wrestle."

Mikey nods.

Mikey Unlikely: "Okay."

They circle again.

This time Mikey initiates the lockup.

Mike tries to take the wrist.

Mikey spins free.

Side headlock.

Mike pushes him toward the ropes.

Mikey holds on.

Mike tries again.

Mikey drops his weight.

Mike changes strategy.

He lifts Mikey.

Mikey releases before the suplex.

Lands behind.

Mike turns.

Mikey catches him with a quick kick.

Another.

Mike swings.

Mikey ducks.

Runs.

Springboard—

Mike catches him!

Mikey's eyes widen.

Mike throws him backward!

Mikey twists in the air and lands awkwardly but stays upright.

Mike charges.

Mikey sidesteps.

Mike hits the ropes.

Mikey catches him coming back.

NECKBREAKER!

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike kicks out!

Mikey sits up.

Mike rolls toward the ropes.

John Phillips: "Now Mikey is starting to find his pace."

Mark Bravo: "And notice what changed. He didn't try to overpower Mike. He made Mike move."

Mikey gets up.

Mike uses the ropes.

Mikey charges.

Mike throws an elbow.

Mikey stops short.

Mike realizes he missed.

Mikey kicks the leg.

Mike turns.

Mikey grabs him.

Mike blocks.

Mikey tries again.

Mike drives an elbow into the ribs.

Mikey releases.

Mike spins.

Hard forearm.

Mikey answers immediately.

Mike fires back.

Mikey responds.

The crowd starts reacting to each shot.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike's is harder.

Mikey's is faster.

Mike throws another.

Mikey staggers.

Mike advances.

Mikey suddenly kicks the knee.

Mike drops slightly.

Mikey hits the ropes.

Mike rises.

Mikey charges.

Mike catches him with a knee!

Mikey flips forward and crashes to the canvas.

The crowd groans.

Mike drops into the cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Mikey kicks out!

Mike sits beside him.

He looks down.

John Phillips: "Mike Best is starting to turn the physicality up."

Mark Bravo: "Because he's figured something out."

John Phillips: "What's that?"

Mike grabs Mikey by the head.

Mark Bravo: "Every second Mikey has to recover is a second he can't steal."

Mike pulls Mikey up.

Front facelock.

Mikey immediately begins fighting the hands.

Mike transitions.

Waistlock.

Mikey hooks the leg.

Mike tries lifting.

Mikey blocks.

Mike tries again.
Mikey blocks again.
Mikey elbows backward.
Mike ducks.
Mikey turns.
Mike grabs him.
Mikey rolls underneath!
Mike turns—
SUPERKICK!
Mike stumbles backward.
Mikey falls into the ropes from the effort.
Mike remains standing.
Barely.
Mikey sees it.
He charges.
Mike swings.
Mikey ducks.
Hits the opposite ropes.
Comes back.
Flying clothesline!
Mike goes down!
The crowd erupts.
Mikey gets up.
Mike gets up.
Mikey hits him again.
Mike falls.
Gets back up.
Mikey charges.
Mike tries catching him.
Mikey slips behind.
Pushes Mike into the ropes.
Mike rebounds.
Mikey catches him with a powerslam!

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike kicks out!

Mikey immediately hooks the leg tighter.

ONE!

Mike escapes before two.

Mikey grabs the arm.

Mike rolls.

Mikey follows.

Mike gets up.

Mikey tries another cradle.

Mike plants his feet.

Mikey pulls.

Mike doesn't move.

Mikey looks up.

Mike looks down.

Mike Best: "No."

Mike yanks Mikey upward.

Mikey twists in midair.

He lands on his feet!

Mike turns.

Mikey swings.

Mike ducks.

Mike catches the waist.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Mikey flips through!

He lands on his feet!

The crowd explodes.

Mike doesn't see it.

He gets up.

Turns.

Mikey charges.

Mike catches him—

Mikey turns it into a sunset flip!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE ESCAPES!

Both men scramble up.

Mike throws a kick.

Mikey catches it.

Mike spins through.

Mikey ducks the follow-up.

Mikey jumps.

Mike catches him.

Mikey counters.

ROLL-UP!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike rolls through!

Mike has Mikey!

ONE!

TWO!

MIKEY ESCAPES!

Both men rise simultaneously.

And stop.

The crowd erupts into applause.

Mikey breathes heavily.

Mike does too.

They stare at one another.

John Phillips: "There is nothing separating them."

Mark Bravo: "Not yet."

Mike wipes his mouth.

Mikey adjusts his jaw.

John Phillips: "Mike has tried to slow him down."

Mike steps forward.

John Phillips: "Mikey has tried to speed him up."

Mikey steps forward.

John Phillips: "Mike has wrestled."

Mark Bravo: "Mikey has wrestled back."

They meet in the center again.

John Phillips: "Mike has fought."

Mike shoves Mikey.

Mark Bravo: "And Mikey hasn't gone anywhere."

Mikey shoves Mike back.

The crowd reacts.

Mike smiles.

Mikey smiles.

Mike throws a forearm.

Mikey answers.

Mike hits him again.

Mikey comes back with one of his own.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike.

Mikey.

Faster now.

Harder.

Neither backing down.

John Phillips: "Here we go!"

Mike catches Mikey with a brutal shot.

Mikey stumbles backward.

Mike follows.

Mikey suddenly explodes forward.

Forearm!

Mike staggers.

Mikey hits another.

Mike fires back.

Mikey fires back.
Mike grabs him.
Mikey grabs Mike.
They struggle.
Mike tries to lift.
Mikey blocks.
Mikey tries to turn him.
Mike blocks.
Mike knees the body.
Mikey answers with one of his own.
They separate.
Both stumble backward.
Both hit the ropes.
Both charge.
DOUBLE CLOTHESLINE!
Neither goes down.
They stagger.
Look at each other.
Run again.
DOUBLE CLOTHESLINE!
Still standing.
The crowd gets louder.
Mikey screams.
Mike screams back.
They hit opposite ropes.
Charge.
COLLISION!
This time both men go down.
Crypto.com Arena erupts.
Mike lies on his back.
Mikey lies beside him.
Both breathing hard.
John Phillips: "This is the final."

Mark Bravo: "And neither one has found the answer yet."

The camera pulls back.

Two men down in the middle of the ring.

The Ring King crown visible beyond them.

No First Class.

No interference.

No excuses.

Just Mikey Unlikely.

Mike Best.

And one crown waiting for whoever can take it.

Mike Best rolls onto his stomach.

Mikey Unlikely turns onto his side.

The crowd continues clapping.

Neither man stays down.

Mike gets to one knee.

Mikey reaches the ropes.

Mike rises first.

He sees Mikey pulling himself upright.

Mike charges.

RUNNING DROPKICK!

Mikey is blasted backward through the ropes!

He crashes to the floor.

John Phillips: "Mikey goes outside!"

Mike doesn't wait.

He hits the opposite ropes.

Mikey begins rising.

Mike comes charging back—

BASEBALL SLIDE!

Mikey moves!

Mike slides all the way outside.

He lands on his feet.

Turns—

MIKEY CLOTHESLINES HIM!

Both men crash to the floor!

Mark Bravo: "There goes the wrestling match."

John Phillips: "They're exhausted."

Mark Bravo: "That's when technique starts becoming instinct."

Mikey gets up first.

He grabs Mike.

Mike drives him backward.

Mikey's spine hits the apron.

Mike throws a forearm.

Mikey answers.

Mike throws another.

Mikey fires back.

The official begins counting.

Mike grabs Mikey.

Mikey blocks.

Mike knees him in the body.

He hooks him.

Mike tries a suplex on the floor.

Mikey blocks.

Mike tries again.

Mikey hooks the leg.

Blocks again.

Mikey punches the ribs.

Again.

Mike releases.

Mikey grabs Mike.

Mike reverses.

Mikey is sent toward the barricade—

Mikey jumps onto it!

He balances for half a heartbeat.

Turns.

DIVES!

Mike catches him!

The crowd gasps.

Mike has Mikey across his body.

Mikey immediately starts throwing elbows.

One.

Two.

Three.

Mike loses his grip.

Mikey drops behind him.

Mike turns.

SUPERKICK!

Mike collapses against the apron.

John Phillips: "Mikey caught him!"

Mikey grabs Mike and rolls him underneath the bottom rope.

He follows.

Mike tries rising.

Mikey hits the ropes.

Comes back.

RUNNING KNEE!

Mike goes down!

Mikey covers!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE KICKS OUT!

Mikey falls backward.

The crowd reacts to the near fall.

John Phillips: "Two and nine-tenths!"

Mark Bravo: "And look at Mikey."

Mikey sits staring at Mike.

No complaining.

No argument with the official.

He's thinking.

Mark Bravo: "He's counting opportunities now."

Mikey gets up.

Mike rolls onto his hands and knees.

Mikey sees him.

He backs into the corner.

Mike begins rising.

Mikey charges.

Mike moves!

Mikey stops himself before hitting the turnbuckles.

He turns—

Mike grabs him.

EXPLODER SUPLEX!

Mikey crashes across the ring!

Mike doesn't cover.

He gets up.

Mikey crawls toward the ropes.

Mike follows.

Grabs him around the waist.

BELLY-TO-BACK SUPLEX!

Mikey folds on impact.

Mike rolls through.

Pulls him up again.

SNAP SUPLEX!

Mike floats over.

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

MIKEY KICKS OUT!

John Phillips: "Mike Best is chaining those suplexes together now."

Mark Bravo: "Because Mikey's getting harder to catch. So when Mike catches him, he's making every second hurt."

Mike sits up.

He grabs Mikey's arm.

Mikey immediately pulls it toward his chest.

Too late.

Mike twists.

He begins threading the arm.

Mikey realizes what is happening.

John Phillips: "Wait a minute."

Mike hooks him.

THE GILDED CAGE!

The chicken wing Muta lock is applied!

Mikey's body bends.

His free hand immediately shoots toward the ropes.

They're nowhere near him.

John Phillips: "GILDED CAGE! MIKE BEST HAS IT!"

Mark Bravo: "This could be it!"

Mike cranks backward.

Mikey screams.

The official drops beside him.

Mikey shakes his head.

No.

Mike pulls harder.

Mikey reaches.

Nothing.

John Phillips: "Mikey has nowhere to go!"

Mark Bravo: "And you can't find three seconds if somebody makes you quit!"

Mikey tries crawling.

Mike's weight stops him.

Mikey reaches again.

Still nowhere close.

Mike adjusts.

Tighter.

Mikey's hand hovers over the canvas.

The crowd rises.

The official asks him.

Mikey shakes his head.

Mike cranks again.

Mikey's hand lifts.

For a moment—

It looks like he might tap.

John Phillips: "Mikey!"

Mikey slams his hand down—

Not tapping.

He plants the palm.

Pushes.

Mike's balance shifts.

Mikey pushes again.

Turns his hips.

Mike tries holding on.

Mikey rolls!

Mike is carried over!

His shoulders hit the mat!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE RELEASES THE HOLD!

Both men scramble apart.

The crowd explodes.

Mark Bravo: "THREE SECONDS!"

John Phillips: "Mike had to let go!"

Mark Bravo: "That's exactly what Mikey has been talking about! Mike Best had him trapped and Mikey still found a way to turn survival into a pin!"

Mike gets up.

He's angry now.

Mikey gets to one knee.

Mike charges.

Mikey ducks.

Mike hits the ropes.

Mikey rises.

Mike comes back.

Mikey catches him.

SMALL PACKAGE!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE ESCAPES!

Mikey rolls away.

Mike gets up immediately.

Mike Best: "STOP DOING THAT!"

The crowd laughs.

Mikey, still on the canvas, holds up three fingers.

Mike charges.

Mikey rolls underneath.

Mike turns.

Mikey jumps.

Mike catches him—

SPINNING SPINEBUSTER!

Mikey is PLANTED.

Mike covers!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKEY KICKS OUT!

Mike stays over him.

His expression changes.

John Phillips: "Mike Best is done playing."

Mark Bravo: "I'm not sure he ever started."

Mike pulls Mikey upright.

Mikey can barely stand.

Mike unloads a body kick.

Mikey doubles over.

Another.

Mikey backs toward the corner.

Mike follows.

Knife-edge chop!

The sound echoes through the arena.

Another!

Mikey's chest reddens.

Mike grabs the wrist.

Whips him across.

Mikey hits the opposite turnbuckles hard.

Mike charges.

Mikey gets a boot up!

Mike staggers.

Mikey climbs to the second rope.

Mike turns.

Mikey jumps.

Mike catches him!

Mike shifts the weight.

Throws him overhead!

BELLY-TO-BELLY!

Mikey crashes near the center.

Mike gets up.

Mikey sits up instinctively.

Mike sees it.

And freezes.

The crowd realizes it at the same time.

John Phillips: "Oh no."

Mikey is seated.

Dazed.

Mike backs into the corner.

Mark Bravo: "GET UP."

Mike stares at Mikey.

Mark Bravo: "Mikey, get the hell up!"

Mike explodes forward.

I KNEED A HERO—

MIKEY FALLS FLAT!

Mike's knee sails over him!

The crowd erupts!

Mike turns around.

Mikey grabs him!

ROLL-UP!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE KICKS OUT!

Both men scramble up!

Mike swings.

Mikey ducks.

SUPERKICK!

Mike staggers!

Mikey hits the ropes.

Mike catches him with a LARIAT!

Mikey turns inside out!

Mike collapses beside him.

John Phillips: "GOOD LORD!"

Mark Bravo: "Mike Best almost took his head off!"

Mike crawls over.

Hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKEY GETS THE SHOULDER UP!

Mike closes his eyes.

Just for a moment.

Then opens them.

John Phillips: "What does Mike have to do?"

Mark Bravo: "Hit the one thing Mikey has spent this entire match trying not to let him hit."

Mike slowly rises.

He looks down at Mikey.

Mikey is barely moving.
Mike grabs him.
Pulls him up.
Mikey throws a weak forearm.
Mike absorbs it.
Mikey throws another.
Mike answers with one of his own.
Mikey drops to a knee.
Mike looks down.
His eyes widen.
Mikey is kneeling.
John Phillips: "Again!"
Mike backs away.
Mikey looks up.
He knows.
Mike charges.
I KNEED A HERO—
MIKEY DIVES SIDEWAYS!
Mike stops himself against the ropes!
Mikey scrambles up.
Mike turns.
Mikey charges.
Mike sidesteps.
Mikey hits the ropes.
Mike grabs him on the rebound.
Mikey counters.
Mike counters back.
Mikey rolls through.
Mike grabs the ankle.
Mikey kicks him away.
Mike stumbles.
Mikey rises.
SUPERKICK!

Mike falls to one knee!

Mikey sees him.

Charges.

Mike catches him around the waist!

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Mikey lands high on his shoulders!

Mike keeps the grip.

Pulls him up.

SECOND GERMAN!

Still holding him.

Mike drags Mikey upright again.

Mikey desperately grabs the ropes.

Mike pulls.

Mikey refuses to release.

Mike pulls harder.

The official warns them.

Mikey suddenly releases voluntarily.

Mike wasn't expecting it.

They tumble backward!

Mikey lands on top!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE KICKS OUT!

The building erupts again.

Mark Bravo: "HE ALMOST STOLE IT AGAIN!"

Mike rolls onto his knees.

He stares at Mikey.

Mikey stares back.

Both are breathing heavily.

Both are hurting.

Neither man smiles anymore.

John Phillips: "Every time Mike thinks he has control, Mikey turns something into three seconds."

Mark Bravo: "And every time Mikey thinks he's escaped, Mike grabs him and throws him halfway across the damn ring."

Mikey gets up.

Mike gets up.

They walk toward each other.

No circling this time.

No feeling out.

Forehead to forehead.

The crowd rises.

Mike Best: "Still here?"

Mikey breathes heavily.

Mikey Unlikely: "Unfortunately for you."

Mike smirks.

Forearm.

Mikey fires back.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike.

Mikey.

The strikes get harder.

Mike kicks Mikey in the ribs.

Mikey answers with a kick to the thigh.

Mike throws a knee.

Mikey blocks.

Mikey fires a forearm.

Mike catches the arm.

Mikey spins out.

Mike catches him again.

Mikey breaks free.

Mike throws a high kick.

Mikey ducks.

Mikey jumps.

Mike catches him.

Mikey slips behind.

Mike turns.

DOUBLE FOREARM!

Both men stagger.

Mike swings again.

Mikey ducks.

Mikey swings.

Mike ducks.

Mike goes for the waist.

Mikey escapes.

Mikey hits the ropes.

Mike turns.

Mikey leaps—

Mike catches him in midair!

Mike hoists him up.

Mikey starts throwing elbows.

Mike keeps him elevated.

Mikey throws another.

Mike loses his grip.

Mikey drops behind.

Mike spins around.

Mikey catches him!

DDT!

Mike's head spikes into the canvas!

Mikey rolls him over!

Hooks both legs!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE BEST KICKS OUT!

Mikey collapses beside him.

The crowd comes to its feet.

John Phillips: "Again!"

Mark Bravo: "How much closer can Mikey get?!"

Mikey pounds the canvas once.
Not at the official.
At himself.
He pushes himself up.
Mike is still down.
Mikey looks toward the crown at ringside.
Then toward Mike.
He reaches down.
Pulls Mike up.
Mike suddenly catches the wrist.
Mikey's eyes widen.
Mike pulls him in.
SHORT-ARM LARIAT!
Mikey collapses.
Mike drops to his knees.
He can't capitalize immediately.
John Phillips: "They're emptying everything."
Mark Bravo: "And neither man has gotten what he needs."
Mike crawls toward Mikey.
Mikey rolls away.
Mike follows.
Mikey reaches the corner.
Mike pulls himself upright.
Mikey uses the turnbuckles.
Mike sees him beginning to rise.
He moves toward him.
Mikey suddenly lunges.
Mike catches him.
They struggle.
Mikey breaks free.
Mike shoves him away.
Mikey rebounds off the ropes.
Mike charges.

They collide.

Both stumble backward.

And then...

The crowd changes.

Not louder.

Different.

A wave of boos begins somewhere behind the hard camera.

Mikey hears it.

Mike hears it.

Neither immediately looks away from the other.

John Phillips: "What is that?"

The boos spread.

Mikey finally glances toward ringside.

Mike turns his head.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, you have got to be kidding me."

Maxwell Jett walks into view.

Slowly.

Smiling.

From another side of the ring comes Jacoby Jacobs.

From the opposite side...

Darian Darrington.

Three men.

Three sides.

The crowd rains boos down upon them.

Mike Best looks from Maxwell...

To Jacoby...

To Darian.

Mikey does the same.

Maxwell stops at ringside.

He says nothing.

He simply smiles.

John Phillips: "First Class."

Mark Bravo: "And suddenly this isn't a wrestling match anymore."

Mikey looks across the ring at Mike.

Mike looks back.

Neither man needs an explanation.

Mike slowly turns so his back is no longer exposed to First Class.

Mikey does the same.

Without discussing it...

Without shaking hands...

Without trusting one another for a second...

Mikey Unlikely and Mike Best move back-to-back in the center of the ring.

Maxwell's smile widens.

John Phillips: "Oh boy."

Jacoby climbs onto the apron.

Darian climbs onto the opposite apron.

Maxwell steps onto the third.

Mikey looks left.

Mike looks right.

Mark Bravo: "For the next thirty seconds, boys..."

First Class prepares to enter.

Mark Bravo: "...you might wanna forget which one of you is supposed to win this thing."

Jacoby Jacobs steps through the ropes.

Darian Darrington does the same.

Maxwell Jett remains on the apron.

Watching.

Smiling.

Mikey Unlikely and Mike Best remain back-to-back in the middle of the ring.

The official immediately moves toward Jacoby.

John Phillips: "They have no business being out here! Get them out!"

Mark Bravo: "I don't think they're particularly interested in what they're allowed to do, John."

The official points toward the floor.

Jacoby raises his hands.

Darian does the same.

Mock innocence.

Maxwell laughs from the apron.

The official turns toward him.

That's all it takes.

Jacoby charges Mikey!

Darian charges Mike!

MIKEY DROPS JACOBY WITH A FOREARM!

MIKE BLASTS DARIAN WITH ONE OF HIS OWN!

The crowd erupts!

John Phillips: "NO!"

Jacoby comes back.

Mikey catches him again.

Darian swings at Mike.

Mike ducks.

BODY KICK!

Darian doubles over.

Mike grabs him.

SNAP SUPLEX!

Darian crashes across the canvas!

Mikey drives Jacoby backward with another shot.

Jacoby hits the ropes.

Mikey whips him across.

Jacoby rebounds—

MIKEY BACKDROPS HIM!

Jacoby lands hard!

The building is rocking.

Mark Bravo: "For the first and probably last time in human history, Mike Best and Mikey Unlikely are a tag team!"

Darian gets up.

Mike grabs him.

Darian shoves Mike away.

Mikey turns.

Darian charges—

Mikey ducks!

Darian runs directly into Mike!

Mike catches him!

BELLY-TO-BELLY SUPLEX!

Darian flies across the ring!

John Phillips: "BEST GOT HIM!"

Jacoby gets back to his feet.

He charges Mike from behind.

Mikey sees it.

SUPERKICK!

Jacoby's head snaps backward!

Mike turns.

He looks at Mikey.

Mikey looks back.

Mike gives him the smallest nod imaginable.

Mikey points at him.

Mikey Unlikely: "You owe me."

Mike almost smiles.

Mike Best: "Fuck off."

Mikey grins.

Mark Bravo: "Beautiful friendship."

John Phillips: "I don't think I'd go that far."

Jacoby rolls toward the ropes.

Darian crawls toward another side.

Mikey grabs Jacoby.

Mike grabs Darian.

They pull them upright.

Mike looks toward Mikey.

Mikey looks toward Mike.

And simultaneously—

THEY THROW JACOBY AND DARIAN OVER THE TOP ROPE!

The crowd explodes!

Jacoby crashes to the floor.

Darian lands beside him.

John Phillips: "OUT THEY GO!"

Mikey throws both arms out.

Mike turns toward Maxwell.

Maxwell's smile is gone.

Mike motions with both hands.

Mike Best: "Come on."

The crowd roars.

Mikey turns toward Maxwell too.

He waves him inside.

Mikey Unlikely: "Yeah. Your turn."

Maxwell looks at Mike.

Then Mikey.

Then Jacoby and Darian on the floor.

He slowly steps down from the apron.

The crowd boos.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, look at that. Suddenly Maxwell Jett has discovered restraint."

John Phillips: "For once, it's the smartest decision he's made."

Mikey walks toward the ropes.

Mikey Unlikely: "What's wrong, Max?"

Maxwell backs away.

Mikey leans over the top rope.

Mikey Unlikely: "Come clear the path."

Maxwell stops.

His eyes narrow.

Mikey doesn't know the significance of what he just said.

Maxwell does.

John Phillips: "Wait."

Mark Bravo: "Mikey needs to turn around."

Darian grabs Mikey's ankle from the floor!

Mikey drops!

Jacoby reaches underneath the bottom rope and grabs the other leg!

They yank!

Mikey is dragged beneath the bottom rope!

John Phillips: "DAMMIT!"

Mikey hits the floor.

Jacoby stomps him.

Darian joins in.

Mike immediately heads toward the ropes.

Maxwell slides into the ring behind him.

Mark Bravo: "MIKE!"

Mike turns—

MAXWELL DRIVES A KNEE INTO HIS MIDSECTION!

Mike doubles over.

Maxwell clubs him across the back.

Again.

Mike drops to one knee.

Maxwell grabs him by the head.

Maxwell Jett: "Wrong tournament."

Mike fires a punch into Maxwell's ribs!

Another!

Mike rises!

Maxwell staggers backward.

Mike grabs him.

Maxwell's eyes widen.

Mike tries to throw him—

Darian dives back into the ring!

He hits Mike from behind!

Mike releases Maxwell.

Jacoby slides inside.

Three-on-one.

John Phillips: "Come on! This is enough!"

Mike throws a forearm at Darian.

Jacoby hits him from the side.

Mike swings at Jacoby.

Maxwell kicks Mike's knee.

Mike drops.

Darian hits him.

Jacoby hits him.

Maxwell stands over him.

Mikey slides back underneath the bottom rope!

He dives into Jacoby!

Both men tumble across the canvas!

Mark Bravo: "MIKEY'S BACK!"

Mikey mounts Jacoby and starts throwing punches.

Darian leaves Mike and grabs Mikey.

Mikey elbows him.

Darian stumbles.

Mikey turns.

Maxwell charges.

Mikey ducks!

MAXWELL HITS DARIAN!

Darian goes down!

The crowd erupts!

Maxwell turns—

MIKEY DROPS HIM WITH A RIGHT HAND!

John Phillips: "Jett is down!"

Mikey turns around.

Jacoby charges.

Mikey catches him.

Mike gets back to his feet.

Mikey shoves Jacoby toward him.

Mike grabs Jacoby.

GERMAN SUPLEX!

Jacoby crashes!

Mike rises.

Mikey and Mike stand together again.

Maxwell crawls toward the ropes.

Darian does the same.

Jacoby rolls toward the floor.

John Phillips: "They fought them off again!"

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but look at Mike. Look at Mikey. This isn't free."

Mike is holding his ribs.

Mikey is favoring his neck and shoulder.

Both men are breathing heavily.

They were already exhausted.

Now they're damaged.

Maxwell slides outside.

Jacoby joins him.

Darian rolls beneath the bottom rope.

First Class regroups at ringside.

The official screams at them to leave.

Maxwell ignores him.

He straightens his shirt.

Fixes his hair.

Then smiles.

John Phillips: "Get them out of here!"

Mark Bravo: "They're not leaving."

The official points toward the entrance.

Maxwell shakes his head.

No.

He isn't coming back into the ring.

But he isn't leaving either.

Jacoby moves to Maxwell's left.

Darian moves to his right.

The three members of First Class stand together at ringside.

Watching.

John Phillips: "What the hell do they want?"

Mark Bravo: "They already told us."

Maxwell looks into the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Clear the path."

Mikey hears him.

He looks down at Maxwell.

Mike does too.

Maxwell gives them a little wave.

Go ahead.

Finish.

Mikey looks furious.

Mike walks toward the ropes.

The official gets between him and First Class.

Mike points down at Maxwell.

Mike Best: "Get the fuck out."

Maxwell laughs.

He doesn't move.

Mikey approaches Mike.

Mike turns.

For a second, neither man knows what happens now.

The crowd is still raining boos onto First Class.

Mikey looks at Mike.

Then at Maxwell.

Then back at Mike.

Mikey Unlikely: "You wanna finish this?"

Mike stares at him.

Mike Best: "Yeah."

Mikey nods.

Mikey Unlikely: "Me too."

They separate.

The crowd realizes what is happening.

The noise begins building again.

John Phillips: "After all of that..."

Mikey backs toward one side of the ring.

Mike backs toward the other.

John Phillips: "...they still want to finish it."

Mark Bravo: "Of course they do."

Mike wipes blood from the corner of his mouth.

Mikey rolls his damaged shoulder.

Mark Bravo: "Because neither one wants Maxwell Jett deciding who Ring King is."

Maxwell folds his arms at ringside.

Smiling.

The official looks at Mikey.

Then Mike.

Both nod.

Continue.

Mike steps forward.

Mikey does the same.

The crowd rises again.

John Phillips: "Then settle it."

Mike throws the first forearm.

Mikey answers.

Mike fires again.

Mikey responds.

Neither has the same power they had ten minutes ago.

But neither stops.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike.

Mikey.

Mike kicks Mikey in the body.

Mikey folds.

Mike grabs him.

SNAP SUPLEX!

Mike rolls over.

He can't cover immediately.

His ribs won't let him.

John Phillips: "There's the damage from First Class."

Mark Bravo: "That's what they wanted. Even if they never touch either guy again, they're in this match now."

Mike forces himself up.

Mikey rises behind him.

Mike turns.

SUPERKICK!

Mike drops to a knee.

Mikey sees it.

He runs.

Mike suddenly rises and catches him!

SPINEBUSTER!

Mikey crashes down!

Mike collapses across him!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKEY GETS A SHOULDER UP!

The building erupts.

Mike rolls onto his back.

Mikey remains down.

At ringside, Maxwell applauds.

Slowly.

Sarcastically.

Mike hears it.

He turns his head.

Maxwell smiles at him.

Mike starts to rise.

John Phillips: "Don't do it, Mike."

Mark Bravo: "That's exactly what Maxwell wants."

Mike takes one step toward the ropes.

Maxwell opens his arms.

Come on.

Mike stops.

He looks at Maxwell.

Then back at Mikey.

Mike turns away from First Class.

Mark Bravo: "Good."

Mike walks toward Mikey.

Mark Bravo: "Don't let him write your ending."

Mike reaches down.

Mikey grabs him!

SMALL PACKAGE!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—

MIKE ESCAPES!

The crowd explodes!

Mike rolls away.

Mikey crawls toward the ropes.

Mike looks back at him.

Mikey looks back at Mike.

Three fingers.

Even now.

Mike shakes his head.

Mike Best: "Motherfucker."

Mikey smiles through the pain.

Mike gets up.

Mikey gets up.

They charge.

Mike swings.

Mikey ducks.

Mikey catches the waist.

Mike elbows free.

Mike grabs Mikey.

Mikey spins through.

Mike catches him again.

Mikey drops down.

Mike loses him.

Mikey rolls Mike forward!

ONE!

TWO!

Mike escapes!

Mike rises.

Mikey charges.
Mike catches him with a KNEE!
Mikey drops!
Mike stumbles backward.
Mikey is seated.
The crowd realizes it.
Mike realizes it.
John Phillips: "MIKEY'S DOWN!"
Mike looks toward the corner.
Then at Mikey.
Mark Bravo: "This is it."
Mike backs away.
His ribs are screaming.
He ignores them.
Mikey shakes his head.
Trying to clear it.
Mike braces himself.
Maxwell leans forward at ringside.
Jacoby does too.
Darian watches.
John Phillips: "If this lands, nobody has ever kicked out."
Mike charges.
I KNEED A HERO—
MIKEY MOVES!
Mike's knee misses by inches!
Mike turns—
MIKEY GRABS HIM!
Mike fights!
Mikey tries to pull him down!
Mike stays upright!
Mikey changes direction!
Mike rolls through!
Both men get up!

Mike swings!
Mikey ducks!
Mike turns!
SUPERKICK!
Mike staggers backward!
He hits the ropes!
Comes back!
Mikey catches him!
Mike reverses!
Mikey reverses back!
Mike tries to break free!
Mikey holds on!
Both men tumble to the canvas!
MIKEY STACKS HIM!
Both legs hooked!
Mike struggles!
ONE!
Mike pushes!
TWO!
Mike twists!
Mikey shifts his weight!
THREE!
THE BELL RINGS!
For half a second...
Mikey doesn't move.
Mike doesn't move.
Then Crypto.com Arena explodes.
John Phillips: "HE GOT HIM!"
Mikey releases the legs.
Mike rolls onto his stomach.
Mikey falls backward.
John Phillips: "MIKEY UNLIKELY HAS DONE IT!"
Mark Bravo: "THREE SECONDS!"

The official raises Mikey's arm from the canvas.

John Phillips: "Sixteen entered!"

Mikey's eyes close.

John Phillips: "Eight survived!"

Mike rolls toward the ropes.

John Phillips: "Four remained!"

Mikey slowly sits up.

John Phillips: "Two came to Los Angeles!"

The official raises his arm again.

John Phillips: "AND MIKEY UNLIKELY IS THE 2026 RING KING!"

The crowd roars.

Mikey looks toward the Ring King crown.

He should be smiling.

He isn't.

Mark Bravo: "Look at him."

Mikey looks toward First Class.

Maxwell Jett is smiling.

Jacoby Jacobs is smiling.

Darian Darrington is smiling.

Mikey's expression hardens.

John Phillips: "Mikey won."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah."

Mikey looks back at Mike Best.

Mike is sitting against the bottom rope.

Exhausted.

Frustrated.

Mikey gets to his feet.

The official tries to raise his hand again.

Mikey pulls it away.

Not angrily at the official.

He just doesn't want it.

Not yet.

Mark Bravo: "That's not how he wanted it."

John Phillips: "No."

Mikey looks at Mike.

Mike looks back.

Neither man says anything.

Mikey glances toward First Class again.

John Phillips: "The record book will say Mikey Unlikely defeated Mike Best."

Mark Bravo: "But Mikey knows those three bastards changed this match."

Mike pulls himself through the ropes.

He drops to the floor.

Mikey watches him go.

Mike doesn't look at Maxwell.

Doesn't look at Jacoby.

Doesn't look at Darian.

He simply begins walking away from the ring.

Mikey remains inside.

The newly crowned Ring King.

And he looks pissed.

Then Maxwell Jett climbs onto the apron.

Mikey turns.

Jacoby climbs onto another side.

Darian onto the third.

John Phillips: "Wait a minute."

Mikey looks around.

Three sides.

Again.

Only this time...

Mike Best is gone.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, no."

Maxwell steps through the ropes.

Jacoby follows.

Darian follows.

Mikey raises his fists.

Exhausted.

Hurting.

But ready.

Maxwell smiles.

Maxwell Jett: "Congratulations."

Mikey Unlikely stares at him.

Jacoby Jacobs begins moving to Mikey's left.

Darian Darrington moves to his right.

Mikey sees them.

He adjusts his stance.

Mikey Unlikely: "You guys wanna congratulate me, send a fucking fruit basket."

Maxwell smiles.

Maxwell Jett: "Oh, Mikey."

Mikey looks at Jacoby.

Then Darian.

Then back at Maxwell.

Maxwell Jett: "This isn't about congratulations."

Mikey nods.

Mikey Unlikely: "Figured."

JACOBY CHARGES!

Mikey turns and blasts him with a forearm!

Darian attacks from the other side!

Mikey catches him with an elbow!

Maxwell rushes in!

Mikey throws a right hand!

Maxwell staggers backward!

The crowd erupts!

John Phillips: "Mikey's fighting!"

Mark Bravo: "Of course he's fighting!"

Jacoby grabs Mikey from behind.

Mikey throws his head backward!

Jacoby releases!

Darian grabs Mikey.

Mikey drives an elbow into his ribs!

Another!

Darian releases.

Mikey turns—

MAXWELL KICKS HIM IN THE KNEE!

Mikey drops.

Jacoby immediately drives a boot into his back.

Darian stomps him from the other side.

John Phillips: "Come on! The man just went through the Ring King Final!"

Mark Bravo: "That's why they're doing it now!"

Mikey tries getting up.

Jacoby kicks him back down.

Darian stomps the ribs.

Maxwell stands over him.

The smile is gone.

He reaches down.

Grabs Mikey by the hair.

Pulls his head up.

Maxwell Jett: "Three seconds."

Maxwell slaps him across the face.

The crowd erupts in boos.

Maxwell Jett: "That's adorable."

Mikey spits at him.

Maxwell recoils.

The crowd explodes.

Mark Bravo: "HA!"

Maxwell wipes his face.

Looks at his hand.

Looks back at Mikey.

His expression changes.

Maxwell Jett: "Pick him up."

Jacoby and Darian each grab an arm.

They pull Mikey to his feet.

Mikey struggles.

He kicks toward Maxwell.

Misses.

Jacoby tightens his grip.

Darian does the same.

Mikey tries pulling free.

He can't.

Maxwell backs away.

John Phillips: "No."

Maxwell slides underneath the bottom rope.

John Phillips: "No, no, no."

He reaches underneath the ring.

Mark Bravo: "I've seen this before."

Maxwell pulls out a steel chair.

The reaction changes instantly.

John Phillips: "So have I."

Maxwell slides back into the ring.

Chair in hand.

Mikey sees it.

He begins fighting harder.

Jacoby and Darian hold him.

John Phillips: "This is exactly what they did to Chris Ross!"

Mark Bravo: "Hold the man still."

Maxwell unfolds nothing.

Doesn't need to.

He grips the chair with both hands.

Mark Bravo: "And Maxwell swings."

Mikey pulls against Jacoby.

Against Darian.

Nothing.

Maxwell positions himself directly in front of the newly crowned Ring King.

He raises the chair slightly.

Mikey stares at him.

Maxwell Jett: "You won."

Maxwell smiles again.

Maxwell Jett: "Now get out of my way."

He draws the chair backward—

THE LIGHTS GO OUT.

Crypto.com Arena erupts.

Total darkness.

John Phillips: "What the hell?!"

Nothing can be seen.

The crowd becomes deafening.

Then—

THE LIGHTS COME BACK UP.

Maxwell freezes.

Jacoby freezes.

Darian freezes.

Mikey is still restrained.

But nobody is looking at him anymore.

They're looking toward the stage.

Chris Ross stands at the top of the entrance ramp.

The UTA Championship is around his waist.

Crypto.com Arena explodes.

John Phillips: "CHRIS ROSS!"

Mark Bravo: "THE REAPER!"

Ross stands beneath the lights.

Still carrying the punishment from Madman Szalinski earlier tonight.

Still sore.

Still battered.

Still the UTA Champion.

And staring directly into the ring.

Maxwell takes a step backward.

The chair lowers.

For the first time tonight...

Maxwell Jett doesn't look smug.

John Phillips: "Look at Jett!"

Jacoby releases Mikey.

Darian does the same.

Mikey drops to his knees.

First Class instinctively bunches together.

Maxwell backs toward the ropes.

Ross doesn't move.

He simply looks down the ramp.

At Maxwell.

At Jacoby.

At Darian.

Then Ross raises his arm.

And points.

Straight at them.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, shit."

Maxwell looks toward Jacoby.

Jacoby looks toward Darian.

Darian looks toward Maxwell.

Ross takes one step forward.

The crowd gets louder.

Then—

BAM!

A STEEL CHAIR CRASHES INTO THE BACK OF CHRIS ROSS' HEAD!

John Phillips: "WHAT?!"

Ross drops to his knees.

The UTA Championship hangs around his waist.

Before he can fall—

BAM!

ANOTHER CHAIR SHOT!

Ross collapses onto the stage.

John Phillips: "WHO THE HELL IS THAT?!"

The attacker stands behind him.

Chair in both hands.

Ross tries to push himself up.

The attacker looks down.

Raises the chair.

BAM!

A THIRD SHOT ACROSS THE BACK!

Ross goes flat.

The arena is in shock.

The attacker stands over the UTA Champion.

Chair hanging at his side.

The camera moves.

Gets around him.

Finds his face.

John Phillips goes silent.

Mark Bravo goes silent.

For several seconds, the broadcast lets the audience figure it out.

Then—

John Phillips: "...Devin Sinclair?"

The crowd erupts in a mixture of boos and stunned noise.

John Phillips: "DEVIN SINCLAIR?!"

Sinclair stands over Chris Ross.

Calm.

Composed.

Steel chair in his hand.

Mark Bravo: "That's him."

Phillips looks toward Bravo.

John Phillips: "What?"

Bravo's eyes remain on the stage.

Mark Bravo: "HIM."

The realization lands.

Back inside the ring...

Maxwell Jett is smiling.

Not surprised.

Not confused.

Smiling.

John Phillips: "No."

Jacoby starts laughing.

Darian does too.

John Phillips: "No, no, no."

Maxwell looks toward Devin Sinclair.

Sinclair looks back at Maxwell.

No words.

They don't need them.

John Phillips: "Devin Sinclair was HIM."

Mark Bravo: "Maxwell knew."

John Phillips: "The bus."

Mark Bravo: "Maxwell knew."

John Phillips: "The phone call. 'Tell him it's time.'"

Mark Bravo: "Maxwell knew."

Mikey begins pushing himself up.

Maxwell sees him.

His attention returns to the Ring King.

He points.

Jacoby grabs Mikey's left arm.

Darian grabs the right.

John Phillips: "Mikey! Mikey, get out of there!"

Mikey fights.

He kicks.

He pulls.

He screams at them.

But he's spent.

He just wrestled Mike Best.

He just survived First Class once.

There is nothing left.

Jacoby and Darian drag him upright.

They stretch his arms apart.

Mikey looks toward the stage.

Chris Ross lies motionless.

Devin Sinclair stands over him.

Chair in hand.

Mikey turns back.

Maxwell Jett stands directly in front of him.

Chair in hand.

The symmetry is unmistakable.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, God."

Maxwell looks at Mikey.

Then toward the Ring King crown at ringside.

Then back at Mikey.

Maxwell Jett: "Path cleared."

Maxwell raises the chair.

Mikey stares at him.

Defiant to the end.

Mikey Unlikely: "Fuck you."

Maxwell swings.

BAM!

STEEL CRASHES INTO MIKEY UNLIKELY'S SKULL!

John Phillips: "NO!"

Jacoby and Darian release him.

Mikey crumples to the canvas.

The crowd rains hatred down upon First Class.

Maxwell stands over the 2026 Ring King.

Chair still in his hands.

Jacoby stands beside him.

Darian on the other side.

At the top of the stage...

Devin Sinclair stands over the UTA Champion.

Chris Ross is down.

Mikey Unlikely is down.

The two men who leave Ring King with the biggest prizes...

UTA Champion.

Ring King.

Both laid out.

John Phillips: "My God."

Maxwell looks toward the stage.

Devin looks toward the ring.

Slowly...

Devin Sinclair raises his steel chair into the air.

Inside the ring...

Maxwell Jett raises his.

The camera pulls back.

Devin Sinclair standing over Chris Ross.

Maxwell Jett, Jacoby Jacobs and Darian Darrington standing over Mikey Unlikely.

Two steel chairs raised.

Two bodies down.

One faction responsible.

Mark Bravo: "First Class just declared war."

Maxwell smiles.

Devin doesn't.

He simply stands over the UTA Champion with the chair held high.

The image holds.

And holds.

And holds.

Then—

BLACK.

Conclusion

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