

A close-up, high-angle shot of a thick, circular brass ring. The ring is made of a polished metal with a warm, golden-brown hue. The interior of the ring is a deep, solid black, creating a stark contrast with the metallic rim. Centered within this black void, the words "BRASS RING" are stacked above "ROUNDUP" in a bold, white, serif typeface. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are floating or attached to the inner surface of the ring.

BRASS RING ROUNDUP

May 9th, 2018

[We fade into a black screen with the AWA logo splashed across a starry field. A barrage of lasers flash in from all sides of the screen, etching along the borders of the letters, illuminating the plain white text into glowing and glittering gold. A deep voiceover begins. The words "American Wrestling Alliance" come up one by one at the bottom of the screen.]

"The recognized symbol of excellence in professional wrestling."

[Back to black for a moment...

...and then as we hear the opening notes of a highly edited version of "Countin' Up" by Rico Nasty for just a bit before we fade up on a studio setup - almost like a news desk with four people set up along a long desk, stacks of papers in front of them and a large TV monitor hanging behind them. The welcoming graphic says we're watching the "Brass Ring Roundup on Hulu."

The camera cuts to the host of the show, the man notorious as one of wrestling's resident scoopsters - Sweet Lou Blackwell - dressed in a black polo with the AWA logo stitched in white on the breast as he grins at the camera.]

SLB: Hot time - summer in the city... and the AWA is gettin' hotter than ever! Hello, fans... and welcome to the Brass Ring Roundup, your spot for all the news and notes about one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the summer - the AWA Brass Ring Tournament! Sixteen of the brightest up and coming stars in the world of professional wrestling colliding for the right to be known as the best... the one who grabbed the Brass Ring... who earned that AWA contract... and who knows what other prizes sit at the end of that rainbow. I'm your host for the Brass Ring Roundup, Sweet Lou Blackwell... and as you can see, we've collected quite the illustrious panel for you to analyze and prophesize...

[A voice rings out from off-camera.]

"Is that even a word, Lou?"

[Blackwell grins.]

SLB: Of course it is! And without pomp and circumstance, welcome to our panel... first, the man with impeccable timing... he's a former AWA National Champion... he's Head Trainer at the Combat Corner and one of the AWA's top talent scouts... he's the San Jose Shark himself, Marcus Broussard - welcome to the show, Shark!

[Broussard's gone for the sportcoat over polo shirt look, nodding at Blackwell with a grin of his own.]

MB: The pleasure's all yours, Lou.

[He spins a pencil in the air, slapping it down on the papers in front of him.]

SLB: And to his right, arguably one of the best managers in the AWA-

[A different voice rings out - female this time.]

"Anyone arguing against that is a fool, Blackwell."

SLB: Well, perhaps... but be that as it may, she is the leader of the group known as the Westerly Dynasty... current manager of James Lynch and Atlas Armstrong... former manager of World Champions like Caleb Temple and Alex Martinez... former AWA executive... Veronica Westerly, welcome aboard!

[Westerly sneers at Blackwell as the camera cuts over to her, dressed in a deep purple velvety looking dress.]

VW: Of course. A chance to get a sneak peek at the future of the business? You'd have to be a bigger fool than you, Lou, to pass that up if you're in my position.

[Blackwell chuckles.]

SLB: Off to a hot start already, I see... and the final member of our panel. Last but-

VW: Certainly least.

SLB: -he's an AWA Ambassador... a former AWA superstar... one of the most popular AWA competitors ever... Sweet Daddy Williams!

[SDW has opted to make it "Casual Wednesday" with a royal blue AWA t-shirt that hugs his belly welly and a pair of blue jeans. He slaps his hands down on the table boisterously.]

SDW: Thank ya, Lou! It's a pleasure to be here with such fine wrestling minds! Me and the Shark are no strangers to each other... and I ain't entirely sure what this little lady has against me but I'm sure she'll warm up to me in no time, Lou.

[Westerly looks appalled at the idea.]

VW: I'd rather warm up to a cactus.

[Lou chuckles.]

SLB: And we are indeed off and running! Folks, it's an honor to be here on Hulu tonight for the Brass Ring Roundup as we'll be taking another look at the competitors in this tournament, giving a little bit of info on their backgrounds, and of course looking ahead to this summer on Showtime to this tournament and what's coming our way. Before we get going though, let's talk about the next edition of Showtime... Reseda, California... the first Showtime EVER outside of Center Stage Studios in Atlanta... the first show of this Showtime summer tour... and it's gonna be a hot one. We know Juan Vasquez has been given some match-making powers for it. We know some of the matches coming our way that night and we know there's more still to come... and we've learned today that ALL sixteen Brass Ring Tournament competitors will be in Reseda. We don't yet know why they'll be there or what they'll be doing... but we know they'll be in the house...

[Blackwell smirks.]

SLB: ...and I've got a sneaky suspicion that before this night is over, we'll know EXACTLY why they've been invited to Reseda. But before we get there, we want to get to know these sixteen competitors battling it out for the ultimate prize for an independent competitor these days - an AWA contract. Let's get the graphic up there... let's see the full field... first, on the men's side...

[The graphic comes up with the eight participants on the men's side of the bracket:

Armani Avery
Gabriel Cordova
Danny King
Adrian Kirk
Bodhi Li
Will Robinson
Rodrick Storm
Elijah Wilde

And then it fades...]

SLB: ...and for the women...

[...to be replaced with the second graphic that reveals the eight battling it out on that side of the bracket:

AKANE
Riley Bennett
Big Boss Shinza
Lily Driscoll
Isabella Liriano
Catalina Lopez
Felicia Love

And then it fades as well, leaving a wide shot of the entire panel.]

SLB: Sixteen of the best in the world... all looking for the biggest opportunity of their careers. We heard from all sixteen last weekend on Showtime... and we're going to hear from them again here tonight. But before we jump into it, I want to turn it over to our panel... two questions... what does a tournament like this mean to the people involved and who has jumped out at you in the early days of this big event? Shark, let's start with you...

[We cut to a closeup of Marcus Broussard.]

MB: You said yourself, Sweet Lou - it's about opportunity. You're gonna hear that word a lot. Tonight. Throughout the whole tournament. And it's so true. These are sixteen tremendous competitors - believe me, I've seen 'em all in action when we were helping to put this field together. Whether you see them live or on tape, there's something special about all of them. In fact, Lou, I'd say there's not a single one of them that doesn't deserve to be in that ring this weekend in Vegas or on the field of Dodger Stadium in front of 55,000 plus screaming fans... but that's not the way this business works. It's a long, hard road to the top... and for these sixteen, that road just got a little bit easier.

SDW: In one way, Shark, yeah... but in another, it got a whole lot harder 'cause they gotta fight it out for two spots. Two!

MB: It's a good point. They're getting the opportunity... but now they've got the whole world watching and seven of the best trying to cut their knees out from under them.

SLB: Opportunity is what they're after according to the San Jose Shark... but Marcus, who has caught your eye so far?

[Broussard strokes his chin.]

MB: It's a tough question, Lou... I'm obviously going to be biased to my kids from the Combat Corner. So, let's make this fair and I'll pick someone who has never stepped foot into a ring to train with me... on the women's side, I've got my eye on AKANE. I know a little bit about her history... I've seen what she's capable of inside the ring... and I know that what she's brought to the ring in Japan is easily translatable inside the AWA squared circle.

SLB: AKANE drawing interest from the AWA's Head Trainer.. but what about on the men's side of the bracket, Shark?

MB: I think you have to be incredibly curious to see what Elijah Wilde is going to do with this opportunity. We've been hearing about him for years now. We know he's wanted this shot. He's wrestled in Japan... in Mexico... and made quite the name for himself doing that. But this is it. The chance he's been waiting for. He certainly has the talent to get to the top... but the temperament?

[Westerly interjects.]

VW: He reminds me a little of Hannibal Carver in his heyday. Violent. Impulsive. Unpredictable.

MB: A good comparison for sure. Wilde's got all of that in him and then some. You wouldn't think someone would take the risk of getting disqualified in a tournament like this but with Wilde, I'll almost be surprised if he DOESN'T come close to getting DQd by an AWA official at some point.

[Lou grins.]

SLB: Alright, AWA fans... the San Jose Shark says AKANE and Elijah Wilde are the two he's got his eyes on so far. Veronica Westerly, you're in a unique position going in this tournament as an active manager. There have been persistent rumors that the Westerly Dynasty may be looking to expand down the road... and even more persistent rumors of perhaps an international flair. Talk to me.

[Westerly glares at Blackwell.]

VW: First off, Blackwell... if I EVER decide to give someone a scoop, it won't be a hotline hyping blowhard like you.

SLB: Ouch.

VW: And secondly, the Westerly Dynasty is ALWAYS on the lookout for new talent. That's not a scoop... that's reality. I watch every single match on every single show to see if someone catches my eye... to see if they prove themselves to be worthy to stand alongside the likes of James Lynch - the next AWA World Champion by the way - and the still-undefeated Almighty Atlas Armstrong. And this tournament won't be any different. I'll be watching... and if you talk about opportunity, there's no greater opportunity than the chance to become a part of the greatest faction in all of wrestling - the Westerly Dynasty. That's what this tournament SHOULD be about to these sixteen competitors.

SLB: Fair enough... you got your eye on anyone?

[Westerly pauses.]

VW: Everyone knows my sister Angelica has one of professional wrestling's best eyes for international talent. There's a reason the AWA hired her as an international talent scout and you can bet she had a hand in making sure that people like Will Robinson, AKANE, and Big Boss Shinza got their names in the mix for this tournament. So, I really rely heavily on her scouting reports... and she tells me that I should keep a close eye on two potential sleeper picks. From the women's bracket, I'm watching out for Big Boss Shinza.

SLB: An interesting pick... perhaps a sleeper pick as you mentioned. Five foot six, 151 pounds out of Kyushu Island, Japan... she's got striking skills, submission skills, some devastating slams and suplexes...

VW: She's a killer, Blackwell. Not only has she laid out people left and right in a traditional wrestling ring but she's also dipped her toe into the world of death match wrestling... and with my own history with names like Martinez and Temple in the E, you know that's something I admire. Plus, her charisma is off the charts - she's a top draw on the independent scene in Japan in every promotion she goes to. I take one look at her and see someone I could turn into a global superstar.

SLB: You make a strong case. What about on the men's side of the tournament?

[Westerly taps her well-manicured fingernails on the desk.]

VW: Who would be able to stand alongside James Lynch and Atlas Armstrong and carry themselves as equals to those men? I'm keeping my eye on Rodrick Storm.

[Blackwell's eyes go wide.]

SLB: Wow! Six foot nine, nearly 300 pounds... the nephew of the former pro wrestling bruiser known as Kraken.

VW: Storm is "The Iron Kraken"... and deserving of the name.

SLB: Absolutely correct. This young man has spent the last few years working in Japan... first, for a series of death match promotions throughout the country and later with a major powerhouse in Total Japan Pro Wrestling. He's as tough as they come. What's stood out to you in scouting him, Veronica?

VW: It's the blend of strength and agility that does it for me. He's just as likely to come diving off the ropes with that guillotine legdrop as he is to slam you on your head with a backdrop driver.

SLB: Rodrick Storm coming to the AWA is the stuff of dreams for Internet fans around the globe... but to sign that contract, he's gotta grab that Brass Ring. Thanks for your insight, Veronica... and that brings us over to Sweet Daddy Williams. What does a tournament like this mean to you, big man?

[Williams chuckles.]

SDW: For someone like me who spent the majority of his career making nickels and dimes workin' for every scumbag indy promoter in the Southern States, I sure wish we had somethin' like it back in the day, Lou. You know, you look up and down this list and you see some people with international experience like Storm... like Wilde... like Shinza... but I like the people who maybe have been workin' a little bit longer... workin' a little bit harder in the lower rungs of the business, trying to get noticed.. payin' them dues. That's who I like... 'cause those are the people I want to see succeed... to drag themselves up the ladder, grab that Brass Ring, and make themselves famous.

SLB: Such as?

SDW: I hate leavin' people off my list, Lou... but from the women, I'm talkin' about someone like Riley Bennett... kids at home, single mom workin' for a better life for her family... I'm talkin' about someone like JoJo Washington who has been kickin' and screamin' her way around this business for a bit and just couldn't get a break because of the way she looks... something I know a thing or two about.

SLB: Amen to that. What about on the men's side?

SDW: This is gonna be a weird sounding choice for me, I get it... but I got my eyes on Gabriel Cordova.

[Broussard's jaw visibly drops.]

SDW: I know, I know... the flashy stuff ain't my style but the kid's been through it. He was annointed as God's gift years ago and ain't a damn thing turned out the way he was expecting it to. But he kept at it. He kept workin'... he kept fightin'... and he's got another crack at it.

MB: Maybe his last crack at it too.

SDW: Absolutely. It's a business, Lou... so at some point, the people that write the paychecks will look at him and say "he's had a long time to make it happen and he ain't got it done... he's outta here." I just hope he finds success before that happens because he's earned it.

SLB: Great lists, guys... and great answers all around. There are so many people I'm looking forward to see compete in this tournament... including this guy who surprisingly none of you mentioned. Former NCAA champion. Former three-time GFC Heavyweight Champion. You talk about someone who has worked hard and

fought for everything he's got... it's this guy right here... let's take a look at Danny King!

[We fade from our studio setup...

...and as we fade back up, walking down a back hallway, draped in a tight fitting, though well tailored, navy blue suit is Danny King. Realizing there is a camera following him, he stops and turns towards them. He adjusts a lanyard hanging from his neck and then his Rolex... though that may be more a flex than a need.]

DK: I was wondering when you guys were gonna show up. You've been following me all day and I figured at some point you'd wanna talk but hey, b-roll am I right? Now, let me tell the fine people on the other side of the screen in AWA land just what's happening. We are backstage at a tonight's GFC show where Danny King will be on commentary all night long. And, to be fair, I gotta give GFC thanks for allowing me, a three time World Champion, to develop some sizzle, develop some character, develop some je ne sais quoi as they say in Quebec by working on commentary and showing the world just how smart I am.

[He taps his temple though with some amounts of sarcasm.]

DK: Because, you see AWA fans, I had to develop myself by myself. I had to go into gyms and get tapped out until I was the one tapping people out. I had to go into the gym and get beat up until I was the one beating up. I had to sweat until my shirt was drenched. I had to run and run and run some more and then get to the gym and do actual work. And did this breed success?

NCAA champion? Check.

[Yes, he finger draws it in the air.]

DK: GFC Champion? Check.

GFC Champion again? Check.

GFC Champion YET again?

[He nods.]

DK: Check.

[Rubbing his chin, King takes a moment to contemplate.]

DK: But for real, AWA fans, I truly appreciate my time on commentary here in GFC, not just for adding another zero to my bank account but for allowing me to get comfortable being me. A guy who earned his keep on his own. Unlike the nepobaby group I am seeing in the Brass Ring Tournament. "Son of", "trained by", "vouched for by". Don't get me wrong, these kids are all talented as hell. I've watched tape on every one of them because that's what a self made professional and world champion does. Nepobabies, oh yeah, but talented? Oh yeah. But see, they don't got what I got?

[King chuckles, again showing off his gold Rolex and ring adorned fingers.]

DK: I don't just mean my ridiculous bank account or worldwide fame and bursting at the seam trophy case. I mean my experience. Not just in a wrestling ring because admittedly a lot of these kids have done more matches than I have, but I mean big time, under pressure experience. Knowing how to fight that extra fight, go that extra bit, grit your teeth and suck it up sort of experience and deal with it later.

And yeah, I'm dealing with some of that deal with it later right now. The aches and pains suck but suck it up. A few more years on this well oiled machine if you ask me. A few more years, a brass ring to go with this gold watch and then Danny King will fulfill those big, big ambitions to finish off the list. Add some AWA gold to this finely toned waist and then compete at SuperClash with the entire world watching me. Then, maybe I can settle into the commentary desk for good, hang up the boots and get fat.

[He chuckles, rubbing his belly.]

DK: But before then, we are gonna get our first round match ups in the Brass Ring tournament and I don't give a flying hoot which nepobaby it is. Because, boys, when you face me in the first, second and final round of the Brass Ring Tournament it's you and me, one on one, with one winner, one man on top. So, boys, get your phone out and set it into pre dial to 911 when you go one one one with THE One, Danny King. I'd flex and pretend to punch you here, but there's no pretend in me but what there is in me is 1, 2, 3, vic-tor-y... see you soon.

But in the mean time...

[He raises his eyebrows in frivolity.]

DK: ...I am single and ready to mingle and Athena Albright is here somewhere.

[With that he turns on his heel and walks out down the hallway, adjusting his jacket collar and yelling out "SUPERCLASH BABY!"...]

...and we fade back to our studio setup.]

SLB: Danny King, former GFC Heavyweight Champion, making it clear what his goals are, fans. He wants to win that Brass Ring and use it as a springboard to competing at SuperClash AND winning AWA championship gold. Let's get some thoughts from our panel.

VW: Danny King is the kind of guy I could see fitting right into the Westerly Dynasty. A three-time GFC Champion? A guy who walks around in a suit with a Rolex? Tell me he doesn't belong standing next to James Lynch and Atlas Armstrong, boys.

SDW: With that ego, he sure does.

MB: You bring up an interesting point, my friend. Danny King made his name for himself in GFC as a blue collar working man's champion... someone kinda like you or City Jack...

[Williams nods.]

MB: ...but the Danny King we just saw seemed a very different man. He DOES seem like someone who would stand next to the likes of James Lynch. It'll be interesting to see how this change in attitude impacts how the fans react to him when he finally steps inside an AWA ring.

SLB: You heard Mr. King mentioning the bracket for this tournament... something we still don't know but something I hear we'll be learning about very soon. In fact, I'm currently being told that before we go off the air here tonight, we're going to get some news on that situation. But whoever Danny King faces, it should be a VERY interesting encounter. Now, moving over to the women's side of the bracket... family history... family legacy has always been a major part of the AWA. So many children and grandchildren and so on of former competitors - men like the

Lynches... like Ryan Martinez... like Harley Hamilton... and this tournament has some as well - we've already talked about some of them tonight. Right now, we're going to hear from one of those competitors... "Diamond" Lily Driscoll!

[We cut to what might be somewhere else in the studio. Seated in a chair before a number of monitors with footage of wrestling matches is none other than "Diamond" Lily Driscoll. The woman with wavy brown hair with blonde streaks in it is dressed in a black T-shirt with a big diamond across the front, along with blue jeans and sneakers. She's leaning back a bit in the chair, that smirk ever present on her face.]

LD: They said they wanted to preview the Brass Ring tournament. They said they wanted to talk about the women who were handpicked to form the field. Well, with every competitor that comes into the field, there's gonna be a narrative about them, because isn't that how they like to hype everyone up.

But I figured that I'd save you the trouble and give you exactly what the narrative is about all the other women in the field.

For starters, you've got the woman who talks about luck, talks about her size... hey, some might describe as how big trouble comes in small packages...

[A pause, then a slight chuckle.]

LD: Oh, you thought I was referring to myself? Sorry, but the Driscoll family doesn't do cliches. I'll get to myself in a minute, but let's get back to the rest.

Then we come to the woman of mystery. The woman who hides behind a mask, who shows us a lot of pictures and images, and we are all left to wonder what it all means.

Oh, and then we get the single mom... I'll admit I didn't see this one coming. But we all know where this one goes, doesn't it? She's gonna do it for the kids, she's gonna do it to make Pa proud, she's gonna do it to stick it to the deadbeat dad....

[A pause, then another chuckle.]

LD: I'd do it in a hillbilly accent for effect but you get the point.

And then we have the woman who's already calling herself the boss of the tournament. She's big, she's bad, she's tough as nails, she's tougher than a...

[A pause, then she shakes her head.]

LD: Nope, like I said, Driscolls don't do cliches.

Then we come to the giant of the tournament, because every tournament has to have a giant. After all, you gotta have the Davey versus Goliath story somewhere and maybe, just maybe, this time the Goliath will actually prevail.

And let's not forget about the family legacy entry and...

[A pause, then another chuckle.]

LD: Oh, you think we've finally come to me? Actually, that narrative has been bestowed upon somebody else. Of course, this family legacy happens to be from Texas, because isn't that like where half of them come from?

And then there's the woman who's got soul, she's got the moves, she's got the groove, she's gonna rock her way to the top, never gonna stop....

[Another pause, then another chuckle.]

LD: Oh, sorry, I mixed up my music genres, but let's forget about that and get to what's really important about the Brass Ring, and that's about "Diamond" Lily Driscoll.

[And now her smirk becomes a smile, as if you couldn't tell she likes to talk about herself.]

LD: And you've got all the narratives you could want about me, like the family legacy, size isn't everything, history could repeat itself... oh, there's a new one for you.

But how about I go with the one that isn't about the cliché, but a simple fact.

[The smirk is gone, replaced with a more serious look.]

LD: I am "Diamond" Lily Driscoll, I am the best wrestler in the Brass Ring tournament and I am going to show why I am the best wrestler! And the only two things the others can do about it are stand back and watch!

[And the smirk then comes back.]

LD: And there is your preview... until next time, it was most certainly your pleasure.

[Cut back to our panel... where we can see Sweet Daddy Williams shaking his head.]

SLB: "Diamond" Lily Driscoll... and folks, I gotta say... after the way "Diamond" Rob tore out of here and burned his bridges, I sure didn't think we'd ever see another Driscoll in the AWA. Sweet Daddy Williams, you look like you've got something to say.

[Williams sighs.]

SDW: Family history aside, I just can't believe the ego on some of these participants.

MB: Oh, come on... you gotta have confidence to succeed.

SDW: Confidence is one thing... this is arrogance. This is-

VW: Arrogance and confidence are two sides of the same coin, Williams. Some of the best to ever do it would be people you call "arrogant," I'm sure. Would you call Harley Hamilton arrogant?

SDW: Absolutely.

VW: Supreme Wright? Sid Osborne?

SDW: Of course.

VW: James Lynch and Atlas Armstrong?

SDW: Without a doubt.

VW: Then I think you've just proven my point. There's nothing wrong with being arrogant as long as you can back it up inside the ring... and that's the question with

"Diamond" Lily Driscoll if you ask me. Blackwell mentioned her brother's history with this company... well, I can tell you from personal experience that people in this business have long memories and can hold a grudge for decades...

SDW: Like your family and the Lynches?

[Westerly shoots a seething glare at Williams who holds up his hands.]

VW: Exactly like that. Lily Driscoll may not be her brother... but she carries some of his sins on her shoulders... and if someone can send him a message by hurting her, I believe they'll take their shot at it. You think someone like Felicia Love or Big Boss Shinza would turn down a shot to gain favor with the office by making sure THIS Driscoll doesn't make it? I sure don't.

SLB: Perhaps a VERY good point as we cross another name of our list to discuss here tonight... and we're going to keep on going with our Women's Bracket now... and hear from a young lady that you JUST mentioned, Veronica. This young lady made some headlines when she revealed she was the last one picked for the tournament... and only got that chance when someone else who was slated to compete dropped out.

MB: She might not have been the first one picked, Lou... but this girl is dangerous. Do NOT take her lightly.

SLB: Let's hear now from Felicia Love who is standing by with another member of our team here on Brass Ring Roundup exclusively on Hulu... Mariah Wolfe! Hey Mariah... welcome to Hulu!

[The shot opens backstage in the AWA interview area. Mariah Wolfe stands next to one of the eight women's Brass Ring competitors, the diminutive Felicia Love. The woman known by the moniker "Five Feet of Ferocity" is dressed in her ring gear, black catsuit with white fur ruff around the collar.]

MW: Thanks, Lou! It's a thrill to be here looking ahead at the future of our sport and...

[Wolfe turns to her interview subject, looking down on her.]

MW: Felicia Love, you have been announced as one of the eight competitors in the Women's Brass Ring Tournament. Anything you want to say to the fans and maybe your opponents in this big event?

[Love's face is incredibly animated. An obvious look of pride expresses itself on her face before it settles on something decidedly pissed off as she rolls her eyes back to the camera.]

FL: Listen, before I address them, I want to address all my haters out there who look at me and see this little girl and wanna dismiss me.

Felicia Love is stealing that Brass Ring while nobody is looking.

You want to get past me you better come correctly because when people underestimate me bad things seem to happen to them.

[She gives Mariah a wicked side eye, waiting for the next question.]

MW: Alright then... looking at the field, do you have someone in mind that you'd like to face in the first round coming up soon?

[Love snorts derisively, her eyes rolling as she pulls a face.]

FL: It doesn't matter. I'll chop down Catalina Lopez if I have to. I don't care if she's a foot and a half taller than me. I'm ready for the ferocity of AKANE. Jo Jo Washington is too slow and Riley Bennett is too clumsy. Driscoll? She thinks she's fast but she's not clever enough. Liriano thinks she's athletic but she's not athletic enough. And Big Boss Shinza? You may run things in Japan but I'm going to run things here in the AWA.

They call me Five Feet of Ferocity for a reason.

I'm going to scratch and claw my way to the Brass Ring.

[Love's lip curls distastefully.]

MW: I've personally seen you in action in the Combat Corner... competing for CCW down in Dallas... and we've even seen you in action on Saturday Night Wrestling as well. No matter what anyone thinks of your size, I've got to say - you're impressive in the ring.]

[Love buffs her nails on her chest as she tips her head up in acknowledgement.]

FL: Oh, I know. I'm not scared of the spotlight. This tournament isn't too big for me. No, this tournament is mine. I am going to apply pressure on my opponents like it's my job.

So Mariah, Felicia Love, is on fire and I'm gonna bring the heat to everyone until they meet defeat. Understood?

[Wolfe nods.]

MW: Understood.

[Felicia look Mariah down and up before she mockingly gives her approval.]

FL: Aight then.

[Love exits, leaving a grinning Wolfe looking on...

...and we cut back to our panel with Marcus Broussard chuckling.]

SLB: Felicia Love certainly seems...

[Lou trails off as he looks over at Broussard.]

SLB: ...something funny, Marcus?

[Broussard is still laughing as he points to Sweet Daddy Williams.]

MB: The look... on... his face...

[The San Jose Shark is practically gasping for air, fanning himself off.]

SLB: Ah yes... well... more arrogance, Sweet Daddy?

[Williams throws up his hands.]

SDW: This girl's knee high to a grasshopper and she STILL thinks she's a world-beater! Show a little humility... show a little grace... show a little bit of gratitude for the opportunity you've been given.

VW: That's your problem, Williams... you think these sixteen competitors have been GIVEN this opportunity. In my book, they've EARNED it. All of them. Marcus said that any of them deserves a spot to compete on an AWA show... and while we might disagree on their likelihood of success if that happens, I don't disagree that they all belong. I think all sixteen have earned the chance to grab that Brass Ring. Would Felicia Love be at the top of my list of favorites to do it? Not at all. But sometimes powerful explosives come in small packages and if you light her up, you may not like the damage she does.

SLB: Felicia Love is certainly looking to do unexpected damage in this tournament... no doubt about that... but she's hardly alone in that. Shark, talk to me about Bodhi Li, the Kiwi Kingpin!

[Broussard grins.]

MB: You talk about unexpected damage, you're right up the alley of Bodhi Li. Straight off the beaches of New Zealand, Bodhi comes from the streets, fighting for fun... and then from rings around the world, fighting for money.

SLB: Shark, I gotta ask about the story of him versus security at the Corner.

MB: Totally true. He showed up uninvited one day to make his pitch to come train at the Corner... we tried to have security toss him...and he tossed them instead. This guy is as tough as they come... as dangerous as they come... and if you haven't heard of him yet, give it time.

SLB: I sat down with him earlier today to get his thoughts heading into the biggest battle of his young career. Take a look...

[We to Sweet Lou Blackwell over in the sit-down interview section of the studio. Across from him is the Kiwi Kingpin, looking every bit like his comics namesake in a sharp smoke gray suit over an electric blue shirt. His topknot is doubled over in a neat manbun. Even his thick, bushy beard looks like he's ran a comb through it.]

SLB: Bodhi Li, at the last Showtime, we were introduced to all the participants in the Brass Ring Tournament, both the women and the men. Your initial thoughts on the field? Anyone in particular you're looking forward to locking up with? Anyone you'd rather avoid until you have to face them?

BL: Hoo boy! There's a lot of MEAT in the field, isn't there? And more than a few who are playing with a few cards short of a deck, as they say...

[He begins numbering off his opponents on his fingers.]

BL: Elijah Wilde... The Dead Man at a Dead End...

This could be your last chance to make something of yourself in the AWA, brother, and that makes you a dangerous man...

The Iron Kraken, who is as crazy as he is big... I've seen what you can do in those deathmatches in Japan, Rodrick, but just know this: if we ever tangle, there won't be any of that nonsense... It's just going to be our bodies and what they've got to give, and I think, Sweet Lou, I've got more left in me than Rodrick Storm has left in his.

[With the index and middle finger extended on his right hand, Li turns to his left hand.]

BL: And then there are the ones who annoy you and you just want to squash them like a bug! The likes of Will Robinson...

The Crusherweight, who is no stranger to me, Sweet Lou. Another dangerous opponent, but also highly crushable...

"Second Chance" Gabriel Cordova, who is looking for redemption, don't you know? Well, sorry, but I'm going to have to squash that dream of yours, brother...

Just like I'll squash that pretty boy Armani Avery.

[With a smile on his face, as if entertained by the thought, Bodhi Li leans back in his seat.]

SLB: Aren't you forgetting someone?

BL: Who? Danny King? He's tough, alright, and he hits hard, but have you ever been stuck in conversation with him, Sweet Lou? That'll put you to sleep double time. As long as I'm not engaging him in a verbal battle, I'm pretty confident of my chances.

SLB: But where does this confidence come from? What distinguishes the Kiwi Kingpin from the competition? What makes Bodhi Li tick?

BL: Besides the combination of size, speed and toughness, Sweet Lou? Yeah, yeah, sometimes the idea of the total package can be a little overstated. Some of the others are bigger, some are faster, more than a couple of them hit as hard, if not harder. I don't think there's anything special about me there.

I could talk about being the hungry, young lion, but my record in CCW and beyond will tell you that I'm one well-fed ba— Sorry, probably can't say that. And I could trot out the dead mother story... Again... But the promise I made my late mother is only one thing that keeps me going... That keeps me picking myself when I'm knocked down!

But dominance? That's a matter of mindset... The very same mindset that has earned me the "King of Shipwreck Bay" nickname. Because I wreck 'em, I plunder and I take what I want. So go ahead and line 'em up... We're going to raise the sails, build me up to ramming speed and we're going to break 'em. The loot's mine for the taking!

[Li leans forward, still smiling, but his jaw a little more set.]

BL: Most of the others will talk about the journey, the path, the climb to grab that Brass Ring. I don't. I'm already there. I can see it. All that's left is to take the plunge, displace the dead weight and I'm there.

I'm the Kiwi Kingpin and the Brass Ring?

[He holds up his right hand, palm up, in front of him.]

BL: It's already mine.

[Bodhi Li closes his hand around the implied token of victory. He nods determinedly, as we fade back to the studio...]

SLB: Bodhi Li, determined and focused on the task at hand - grabbing that Brass Ring and earning a contract on the main roster. Sweet Daddy, was that a little more to your liking?

[Williams grins.]

SDW: Look, the kid's got confidence... he thinks he's gonna put down anyone that gets in his way. He's had his share of hardships and he's gotten right back up when life knocks him down. To paraphrase Miss Veronica here... there's a thin line between confidence and arrogance and I think this kid lands on the RIGHT side of that line, Lou.

SLB: Shark, you know Bodhi Li better than the rest of us. What should we expect to see when he gets inside that ring?

MB: First off, he's one of the hardest hitters in CCW... and he's a whirlwind of offense when he gets going. Look for him to strike first, strike hard, and strike often. If he gets someone willing to trade with him like Adrian Kirk or Rodrick Storm, it's gonna be a sight to see. If he gets someone smaller than him that he can throw around and slam down, it's gonna be a sight to see that too. I expect a big tournament for him and can't wait to see what he can do.

SLB: You just mentioned Rodrick Storm right there - the Iron Kraken if you will - who we heard some praise from earlier from Veronica...

[Veronica nods.]

SLB: ...so let's hear from the man himself as he gets ready to hit into the deep, deep waters in the Brass Ring Tournament!

[We fade from the studio to where a steel chair sits empty in front of the AWA banner. A voice speaks up from behind the camera.]

"Are you sure you don't want an interviewer out here with you?"

[As footsteps echo throughout the very empty room, a gravelly voice responds.]

"Why? They will just ask the same questions they ask everyone else."

[The footsteps get louder as the six foot nine inch tall, two hundred and eighty-five pound beast known as "The Iron Kraken" enters from the left side of the screen. He is attired in black boots, blue jeans and a plain black t-shirt. He sits upon the steel chair, resting his elbows on his knees as he leans forward, head lowered a bit as he looks at the floor.]

RS: The very first question that they always ask is, "Rodrick, your uncle is the Kraken - why are you wrestling in Japan instead of the United States? Shouldn't he have been able to get you any tryout you wanted?"

Give or take a few words.

[Rodrick exhales and a smirk crosses his lips.]

RS: The answer is simple. I don't need to rely on my family name to get me a job. I'm sure if I wanted a tryout and I made a call... yeah, I would have had it in a heartbeat. But that's not what I wanted. I looked at the landscape of this business here in the States and there was no appeal to me.

[Storm raises his head, his elbows still resting on his knees.]

RS: You see, the States have been filled with men on the downside of their nearly thirty year careers, still being shoved to the top of the card with a rocket on their back.

I stand six foot nine, weigh in at nearly two hundred and ninety pounds. I'm a God forsaken beast and the second I would have stepped into any ring here in the States, I know exactly what would have happened.

[Rodrick pauses.]

RS: Either I would have crippled these men, who to this day are hobbling out to the ring after hours of ice packs and shots...

["The Iron Kraken" begins to breathe a bit heavier - it sounds like anger is building within him.]

RS ...or somehow, some way, mostly by hook and crook, these so-called legends would become a beast slayer, standing over my defeated body.

LIKE HELL I WOULD LET THAT HAPPEN!

So instead, I got a flight and traveled across the oceans to Japan. And there they knew exactly what kind of beast "the Iron Kraken" is! When I enter the arenas in Japan, they scream...

[A surprisingly high pitched voice comes forth from Storm as he speaks.]

RS: ..."THE IRON KRAKEN"!

[Storm smirks once again.]

RS: They say my name in fear. They say my name in sheer awe. Most importantly though, they say my name in respect. A respect I have earned night in and night out. They've watched me drop their heroes on their heads, they've watched me drag their heroes faces over feet of barbed wire, pick them up by their necks inside the ring and send them crashing through panes of glass on the arena floor.

They've watched me walk through fire and brimstone as the ring explodes around me!

They've watched me stand tall over their heroes, as my own blood pours forth from my head, arms, back and chest! They look at me in awe, as their heroes retire one by one at my hands.

They whisper my name in fear, in awe, and respect.

And that fear, awe, and respect is why I need the Brass Ring Tournament now.

[Storm pauses and for the first time he raises his head just a bit to look into the camera.]

RS: 'Cause unlike Japan who understand that heroes fall, the fans in the States don't like it when their heroes get put out to pasture. They whine, they cry, and they revolt causing business to plummet and when a threat to the business has emerged from the depths of the sea...

[Rodrick once again pauses. It seems as if he is debating his next choice of words.]

RS: Yet, "The Iron Kraken" has arrived!

And once I've run this gauntlet and grasp the Brass Ring in these two hands...

[Rodrick raises his hands to the camera and holds them there as he continues to speak.]

RS: I will enter the AWA and finally put the old horses out to pasture once and for all!

[Without warning, his hand engulfs the camera lens causing all to fade to a shaky black before fading back to our studio panel.]

SLB: "The Iron Kraken" Rodrick Storm threatening to unleash his fury on the... so-called "old horses" of the AWA... and I'm guessing that won't sit well with at least one member of our panel.

[Westerly interjects.]

VW: Oh, yes... I'm sure Sweet Daddy Williams over here is clutching his pearls over such a bold proclamation aimed at the fatted calfs of the AWA. Men like Shadoe Rage... like Jackson Hunter... like Robert Donovan... men whose glory days have long passed them by yet we're subjected to them clogging up the show like an overflowing toilet while men like my Atlas Armstrong is forced to wait his turn.

[She smirks.]

VW: "The Iron Kraken" isn't waiting his turn, people. He's coming to win this Brass Ring, earn that contract, and flush that toilet once and for all.

[Williams shakes his head.]

SDW: There's no doubting this kid's talent - we've seen the tape, we know the buzz, we know the Internet's been beggin' for him to come Stateside for a while now and now he's here. There's no doubting his legacy... a killer like his uncles Kraken and Kildozer before him. But what I'm doubting is his ability to do what he says he's gonna do. Those "fatted calfs" you talkin' about... those are legends of this business...

[He pauses.]

SDW: Well, maybe not Jackson Hunter... but Rage? Donovan? You really think this punk kid is gonna put them out? I believe you'd have to kill Shadoe Rage before he'd let someone retire him. I truly do.

VW: Don't tell the Iron Kraken that. He might oblige.

[Blackwell chuckles.]

SLB: Rodrick Storm may be getting ahead of himself though, Miss Westerly. He wants to take out the legends of the AWA? He's gotta go through seven other competitors to get that chance. Now, let's switch back to the women in this tournament... and let's talk about someone also coming into this event after competing in Japan for quite some time now - Big Boss Shinza!

[We cut from our studio panel to a locker room, the same setting where we last saw Big Boss Shinza as she paces back and forth. Again, she is attired in an outlandish split-style vinyl jacket, the right side of it black in color, while the other side is white. The hiragana for Shinza "しんざ" is printed in gold on the left sleeve.

Under the open jacket, Big Boss Shinza has on a midriff-bearing, bandeau-style white tube top. She has on loose, white pants adorned with pink, petal-like patterns. The pants feature the striking golden words "BIG BOSS" emblazoned across the right thigh.

In her right hand, Shinza brandishes a kendo stick, which she smashes against a nearby locker as she speaks.]

BBS: [BLEEP]ing...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...flamethrower!

[Smack.

Shinza points the kendo stick down the camera.]

BBS: Who do you think you are clowning, you... You... FREAK?! Sure, you can go ahead and insult the likes of Riley Bennett and Jo Jo Washington... But you're pushing it giving ATHLETES like "Diamond" Lily Driscoll and Isa Liriano the [BLEEP]ing...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...flamethrower...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...treatment!

[Smack.]

BBS: And you definitely...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...DO NOT...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...burn effigies...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...of Big Boss Shinza!

[Smack.]

BBS: How would you feel if I took a sledgehammer to a line of watermelons, huh?! Nobody would ever take me seriously if I did that! And nobody takes you seriously, Lopez... No matter how many times you talk about how you're six feet five!

You want to know what we do to dead wood, Catalina? We chop...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...it...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...down!

[Smack.]

BBS: Then throw it into the wood chipper... Makes it easier to pulp. And that is EXACTLY what I will do to you, should you have the misfortune of finding yourself across the ring from Big Boss Shinza!

That is EXACTLY what I will do to any of the seven women who finds herself facing me in this tournament... And I do not need a [BLEEP]ing...

[Smack.]

BBS: ...flamethrower!

[Smack.

Big Boss Shinza finally rests the kendo stick against her shoulder, as she regards the camera haughtily.]

BBS: You want to play with fire? All it takes is a spark, ladies, and I am that spark you should be cautious about... A tiny spark that will set this field ablaze!

[Shinza thumbs her nose at the camera, as we cut back to our studio.]

SLB: So... uhh... first off, allow me to apologize for the language of Big Boss Shinza there...

VW: It's all in the name, Blackwell. She's the Big Boss. She's used to being in charge. She's used to being in control. She takes orders from no one and answers to no one and you think she's going to play by the AWA's language policy? Ha! This is the kind of competitor this tournament needs! This is the kind of competitor this DIVISION needs! I can't wait to see who she's put up against and I can't wait to see what she does to her.

SLB: Shark?

MB: It's obvious that Shinza's got a flair for the flash... and I like that. But you can't forget what she's capable of inside the ring too. We talked about it earlier - the striking, the submissions, the judo background, the brawling... she's the total package and just the mention of her colliding with Catalina Lopez puts my ass in a seat to watch it.

SLB: It would be a sight to see for sure... but I couldn't help but notice Shinza couldn't resist disparaging a couple other members of the tournament with her words - while praising some others. What do you think it is about Riley Bennett and Jo Jo Washington that's caught her ire?

[Williams speaks up.]

SDW: I think it's how different they are from her. In someone like Jo Jo Washington, we've seen happiness... we've seen joy... we've seen love of life and family and friends and everything makes life worth living, you know? In Riley Bennett, you know her story... a single mom livin' in the heart of America, tryin' to make a better life for herself... the farthest thing from a so-called Big Boss. I think Shinza sees weakness in them and she thinks it's something she can exploit and dominate.

SLB: Can she?

[Williams shrugs with a chuckle.]

SDW: I guess we'll just have to see.

SLB: Alright then... let's hear from one of those ladies right now as we hit the halfway point in reviewing the female competitors in this summer long Brass Ring Tournament!

[We cut from the studio to the woman known as Josephine "Jo Jo" Washington, aka the "Soul of America." The 5'6, 198 pound woman takes up the screen, leaving room for the AWA logo in the top left hand corner of the shot. She is dressed in a blue fur coat with her Star Spangled wrestling gear underneath. She wears a ten gallon cowboy hat and her Detroit-necessary Buffs Cartier sunglasses.]

JJW: What up doe, my baby. The Brass Ring tournament is on and oh for sure it's on the floor! You know, for a kid that grew up the poor daughter of a preacher man in Detroit, Michigan, the Brass Ring tournament is like a dream come true. This might be the biggest opportunity in the history of wrestling. Because you have a chance to come from nothing to something on the biggest stage of them all. This is my time to make all these childhood dreams come true. This is the time for me to make my dearly departed daddy's dreams come true.

[Washington pauses to let those words sink in. After a moment she speaks again, her voice strong with that passion of a Baptist preacher.]

JJW: I call myself the Soul of America for good reason. I got all the love of the people in me. My daddy raised me to show love to everybody and I still do to this day. And everybody has showed me love right back. And that has made me stronger and better than I could ever have been on my own.

[Her voice is ringing out with the spirit now.]

JJW: So eight women are competing for this Brass Ring ... from a giant like Catalina Lopez to that itty bitty kitty Felicia Love, from overseas sensations like Big Boss Shinza to the Coal Miner's Daughter Riley Bennett getting' it out the mud. We got eight different women of all shapes, sizes, colors and creeds competing for that same thing ... the Brass Ring contract and anybody could win, but I got one thing the other seven don't. I got the Soul of America in me!

I got generations of Americans: Black, White, brown all behind and inside me! And that's all I need to win! Those seven? They don't have that love. They don't have that need. They don't have that backing.

So seven other women are gonna face a task as tough as the ones Hercules had to face to beat me and get that contract. Together, America, we will make those other seven fall! They stand in our way and we will smoke them all!

We're gonna make this night real special. We're gonna make it real special for me. We're gonna make it real special for my momma. We're gonna make it real special for the spirit of my daddy who never go to see me live out my dream. We're gonna make it special for us! Oh, baby, it's on the floor!

[And with that, we fade back to the studio to a grinning Sweet Daddy Williams.]

SDW: And there it is, Lou! That joy! That spirit! The Soul of America, baby!

MB: Sweet Daddy, what do you say to people who say that Jo Jo Washington's not a physical match for the other women in this tournament?

SDW: I think that's a whole heap of malarkey, Shark. They look at Jo Jo and they see... they see a lot of things they see in me. They see a belly that's a little bit bulging... they see a rear end that takes up all the seat... and they think that means she can do less than the others? Hogwash! I got all that and then some...

[He slaps his ample midsection.]

SDW: ...and I didn't do too badly.

[Veronica Westerly sneers in his direction.]

VW: You didn't do that great either, did you? No AWA championships to your name before you hung up the boots... and I expect the same for her. I look at her... I listen to her... and I hear softness... I hear this overwhelming love for the fans that has never gotten anyone anywhere. I don't hear a killer instinct to get in there with the likes of AKANE or even a Catalina Lopez. She's weak... and the weak get mauled in a tournament like this.

SDW: We'll see about that.

SLB: Shifting gears now, we switch back to the men's side of the bracket to one of the more controversial members of this tournament... a man who has been hunting for this opportunity for years and now finally has it... of course, I'm talking about the nephew of AWA all-star announcer Bucky Wilde... Elijah Wilde! Take a look...

[There is black and then the faint sound of a camcorder turning on is heard as we hear its lens clicking to focus. The frame is shaky as the camera peers through a curtain, showing a glimpse of the chaos left behind after a brutal match. The shaking camera zooms in on an unmoving figure laying face down, their body sprawled across the wreckage of a destroyed table. The camera then swings around violently to reveal the face of Elijah Wilde.]

EW: We're here in Youngstown, Ohio...

[A voice off-camera can be heard shouting, "We're in Dayton!" Elijah shouts back at the source of the voice.]

EW: Yeah, yeah... Youngstown, Dayton... who gives a [bleep]! I'm trying to tape something, here!

[Elijah turns his face back to the camera.]

EW: Anyway, you saw that, right? That mess out there? That disaster? Brutality like that doesn't just happen by accident. That's what happens when you think you're tough enough to stand in the ring with Elijah Wilde. That's what happens when you think you can take my spot. That's what happens when you try to take food off my plate!

[The camera shakes as Elijah zooms in once again on the still form laying in the ring, as the medical staff attends to him. It lingers on the scene for a moment, before Wilde pulls the lens back to focus on his own face.]

EW: I didn't do it to send a message. I didn't do it to send a warning. I did it, because this is what I've been doing for the last ten years. This is who I am. This is what happens when you try to take what's mine and what I've earned. This is the price you pay for trying to compete with me. You wind up like that. Broken. Beaten. Forgotten.

[He leans in closer to the camera, his face filling the screen. His voice lowers to a whisper, but it's filled with intensity.]

EW: The Brass Ring Tournament isn't a competition. Not for me, at least. It's a formality. It's not about eight men competing to earn that AWA contract, because I've already earned it a thousand times over! It's not about who's the best—because we all know I'm already the best! It's about Elijah Wilde, collecting the

AWA contract that he deserves. Because no one, and I mean NO ONE, deserves it more than me!

[His voice raises, fury building as he begins to shout.]

EW: And when I win—and believe me, I WILL win, when I take that contract? You're all gonna wish you never saw my face. Because, I'm gonna be the most obnoxious, unbearable winner you've ever seen. I'm gonna rub it in all your faces every single chance I get. Do any of you understand how long I've waited for the AWA to recognize me? I'm going to make all of you regret every moment they kept me out!

[He leans in closer to the camera, his eyes narrowed with intense focus.]

EW: And trust me, I'm going to remind all of you every damn day. You'll have no choice but to watch me stand tall, knowing you can't deny me anymore. When I take that contract, I'm not just winning it for myself... I'm winning it for every person who ever doubted I belonged. I'm going to make damn sure you're all going to feel the weight of every damn second I was forced to wait!

[He takes a step back, his tone settling back into a smug sneer.]

EW: So yeah, all of you can keep pretending like this is some big competition. Like anyone else has a chance. But we all know the truth. That AWA contract is already in my hands.

[The camera shakes as Wilde swings it around one last time to show the fallen wrestler being stretchered out of the ring, before turning it back to himself.]

EW: And seven other men, will be left shattered, laying in a pile of their own broken dreams.

[A dark smile spreads on Wilde's face, as the camcorder abruptly cuts to black...

...and we fade back to our studio panel, looking a little shellshocked at what they just witnessed.]

SLB: Elijah Wilde... is that arrogance, Sweet Daddy?

[Westerly interrupts.]

VW: That's not arrogance - it's dominance! This is a guy who has an unflinching belief that he shouldn't even be in this tournament... that he should've been a part of this company long ago. And when you see what he's capable of... and hear the violence dripping out of every word he says... it's hard to argue otherwise.

SLB: I'm sure you've had more than your share of scouting reports on this guy considering his international history.

VW: Absolutely. A member of the Dead Man's Party alongside names like Jay Alana, the American Idols, Riley Hunter... so many others. This is a guy who is already - has already been at the highest levels of our sport. He wore championship gold in Tiger Paw Pro... that's not an easy thing to do, Blackwell.

SLB: It's certainly not... although you have to wonder why with his resume, he's still working independent shows in Dayton, Ohio.

MB: It's the attitude. Veronica's right. He's a killer. But he's also impossible to control. He's brash. He's impulsive. He's violent. And most of all, he's dangerous. He wonders why he hasn't been in the AWA for years already... it's because he's a

risk that a lot of people in the office felt wasn't worth taking. The talent is undeniable... but is getting that talent on your roster worth the absolute terror you drop into your locker room?

SDW: We may get a chance to find out, Shark. 'Cause that's a man talkin' like winnin' this tournament is a foregone conclusion.

MB: It might be. We'll find out soon enough.

[Blackwell nods.]

SLB: He's not the only one with international success that is feeling good about themselves going into this tournament. In fact, Will Robinson has been an early favorite in the eyes of a lot of fans online as they know what that man is capable of.

MB: Another guy who has had success in Japan... he's had success in Europe... and now he's looking to head to the AWA and show that those talents can translate to the biggest promotion on the planet.

SLB: Let's hear right now from the international superstar!

[Our shot cuts from the studio to a locker room, likely at a CCW event judging by the number of Combat Corner banners that are scattered round the room. In the middle of it all - sitting down on a bench - removing his wrist tape is Will "The Thrill" Robinson, coming off a match.]

WR: Ya know, people 'ave been askin', "Will, why's it you've been all 'round the world, England, Spain, Mexico, Japan, Canada, the US, why's it you've gone to CCW when ya could've gone straight to th' Main Roster?"

I tell people it's a good question with a simple answer.

Wha' kinda man would I be if I just skipped ahead an' not proven myself?

[Robinson nods.]

WR: I wanna establish myself as tha best in tha world, and the best way ta start is provin' myself in the Brass Ring Tournament. Me, an' seven other blokes pushing to prove they're ready to step up.

[Robinson rips a piece of wrist tape off, balling it up and tossing it aside before continuing.]

WR: I've been up an' down, I've seen these seven other guys before. 'Ad classics with most of them. And we're gonna 'ave more classics goin' forward. But this tournament, it's mine.

I started over in England, and I made a name for meself, and it got me to Mexico, got me ta Japan, got me to tha US, got me on all o' Potter's lists, got me on tha TikTok an tha Tube.

[He grimaces, reaching back to grab at his neck.]

WR: But ya know, injuries 'appen in this business. Minor setback. Six months ago, I came back and I'm a better wrestler, I'm more rounded and more focused. I lost a year an a 'alf to that injury, I got time ta make up for.

Wrestlin' in CCW is gettin' me back in shape.

Wrestlin' in the Brass Ring is provin' that I'm tha Real Deal, Tha Thrill.

[He gets to his feet, pointing into the camera.]

WR: There ain' nothin that's gonna stop me from takin' the Brass Ring, then nothing that's gonna stop me from hittin' tha top of tha' AWA.

An' that's something ya can count on.

[And with that, we fade through black back to our studio panel.]

SLB: And Sweet Daddy Williams... that's gotta be music to your ears.

SDW: A guy who - like he said - probably coulda flexed his muscle during negotiations to jump right past CCW to the main roster... probably coulda skipped this whole tournament if he wanted to. But he doesn't! He wants to earn it! He wants to show the fans and the entire AWA locker room that he believes he's the best in the world. Yeah, you're right, Lou... I like that a lot.

VW: Pretty dumb if you ask me. He got some bad advice. Why fight your way to the top when you could have started there? This is a guy who came to CCW with lots of buzz behind him. International superstar. Internet darling. His matches have more stars from the dirt sheets than the galaxy has them in the sky. But he wants to work hard... prove himself... it's all nonsense. When you're ready to make something happen, Will... give me a call.

SLB: Veronica Westerly looking to expand her Dynasty perhaps with some international flair but Shark, talk to me about the changes in Robinson's style since he first made a name for himself overseas.

[Broussard nods.]

MB: When people first started noticing this kid, he was the ultimate high flyer. He talked about TikTok and YouTube... go online, search his name, find the highlight reels and music videos of all his crazy dives and leaps and... yeah, he was exciting to watch and he was one of the top cruiserweights in the world. But high risk is called that for a reason, Lou... and when he got hurt, like he said, he lost a year and a half of his career recovering from a serious career-threatening neck injury-

VW: All the more reason to cash the big paychecks while you can.

MB: -and when he came back to the ring, his style had changed. Less dives, less high flying... and more striking, more slams and suplexes, more innovative offense that didn't risk a broken neck if he missed. And it made him better. It made him more well-rounded. It made him jump right from the top of the cruiserweight lists to one of the best wrestlers in the world. But he's still recovering from that injury, Lou... and I think that's part of the reason he went straight to CCW... to regroup, recover, revolutionize his style... but it also makes him vulnerable to an early exit as he tries to become the man he thinks he can be again.

SLB: And just imagine the headlines if the international superstar gets upset in this one... and if you're thinking about men capable of doing it... I've got someone that I think just might get the job done. Our own Mark Stegglet sat down with him... let's take a look...

[We cut from our studio panel... to another part of the studio where the lights are dimmed a little more. Two chairs are seated at an angle to each other separated by a glass table with two AWA branded mugs sitting atop them. On the wall over the table is a brightly lit AWA emblem in light tubing. To the left of the screen is Mark Stegglet whom all the viewers well know.

To the right, sitting in an all black suit, shirt and tie ensemble and wearing sunglasses inside is the upstart kid known as Armani Avery. Avery's rich brown complexion shines under the studio lights and his fresh haircut looks crisp and immaculate. The two men shake hands to begin the interview and Avery takes a sip from his mug, pulling a happy face.

AA: Oooh, you got the good stuff in here, huh? I'm gonna love playing in the big leagues when I get up here. I know that's right.

MS: Yes, we got great water up here.

AA: Water... sure you right.

[Avery raises his sunglasses and gives an exaggerated wink and a smile to the audience. "Water, kids!"

As he holds his smile a tooth gleam "DING" can be heard that causes Stegglet to jump and look around in confusion.]

MS: Did you hear that?

AA: Hear what?

MS: Like a ding or something?

AA: (winking at the audience) Nope.

MS: Weird. I swore I heard something.

[Stegglet gathers himself before he turns to his camera.]

MS: I'm here with one of the newly announced contestants for the Brass Ring tournament, Armani Avery. Armani, we've seen you a few times Saturday nights on AWA TV but I think most people might recognize you from Monday nights. As in Monday Night Football where you played for the Atlanta Falcons. How did you make the jump from the gridiron to the squared circle?

[Armani tilts his head back with a joyful expression.]

AA: Football... man, football created me. Football made me what I am today. I thought I would always play football if I'm being honest with you. I mean, my dad played and ever since I was a child, I played. We would be out there in the backyard and he would be throwing long passes and I would run them down and snatch them. You know ten yards at first... then twenty... then forty then eighty. I had hands, boy. I still got 'em, too.

But that was always the dream... football.

High school. College. You know you gotta work every day... you gotta take care of your body, and I was in that weight room, I was out there in that field... hell, I even took ballet classes and gymnastics to make sure my body was flexible and my footwork was right. People ask me how I'm so graceful, I spent a lot of time working on my footwork and my flexibility. I had to make those tough catches in traffic, you know. That was the rule... if you could get a finger on it, you could catch it. So catch it. No excuses.

[Stegglet nods.]

MS: That sounds like an intense amount of pressure to put on yourself.

AA: It is, but pressure makes diamonds, namtalmbout? And that no excuses mentality? That kinda became the mantra for my life. 'No excuses.'

[Stegglet grins.]

MS: Sounds like it might be your first piece of AWA merchandise.

AA: Right? I like that.

[Avery looks to somebody off camera]

AA: Yo, somebody get the T-shirts ready, dawg!

MS: But football ultimately didn't work out. You got cut in 2016 by the Falcons General Manager Thomas Dimitroff. That must have been a very difficult time in your life.

[Avery leans forward, his eyes growing wide and intense.]

AA: Difficult? Difficult ain't the word, twin. When football didn't work out... shoot, I couldn't make no excuses. I had to admit I just wasn't good enough. That hurt Trust me... that hurt a lot. All I could think was 'Whatchumean I'm not good enough? Do you know my bloodline? I was born for this. This is my world. My daddy was famous for this. I lived this life since pee wee football.'

Just when I thought I'd be sitting on my throne forever... nope... you get the call from Tommy: 'We're moving in a different direction. Thanks for everything.'

And now not only am I out of a job, I'm out of a dream. I mean, what do I do? CFL? Really? Arena football? Really? That wasn't the dream. That wasn't the goal, twin. I mean, I don't want to look down on my brothers in the CFL or Arena Football, but I was used to being at the tippy top and that's where I thought I'd stay at, feel me?

[Stegglet nods.]

MS: But even though you were out of football in the NFL you made the transition to professional wrestling. How did that come about exactly?

AA: Steggy, you gon' love this one, patna! I literally was hanging out at a convention trying to holla at some shawties finna find me a little neck neck and whatnot and Todd Michaelson was there. I didn't know who this man was but he was watching me spit game and whatever and was like "You got a good look and I can see you got the gift of gab. Have you ever thought about a career in professional wrestling?" Man, what? And get my pretty face driven into the canvas? Man, watch out with that, namtalmbout?

[Avery replaces his shades over his eyes and he chortles at the memory. Stegglet grins.]

MS: So you didn't want to wrestle at first? So how did Todd Michaelson change your mind?

AA: How? Easy. Michaelson, he real cool slime, right. He told me he knew who I was. He said he recognized me right away. And he asked me if I thanked the Falcons. Man, what? He was serious, though. Hes aid "You should call the Falcons and say thank you." Hell naw. He said "Tell 'em thank you, because they just cleared the runway for me to take off in the biggest sport in the world. He said wrestling was all footwork and hands. No pads. No mask. He said nobody would hide that million dollar smile and that million dollar face.

MS: And that got you?

AA: It for sure got me thinking.

[Avery strokes his sharp jaw line.]

AA: Boy, you know yo mans is pretty. And the feetwerk is clean, namtalmbout? So I asked him what I gotta do. He told me straight. He said: "Be you. All the way up." That man ain't ever lie. I showed up at the Combat Corner and man.. wrestling and football are very similar. Strength, endurance, footwork... discipline, repetition and competition. You know I felt right at home even though it wasn't my home.

MS: What was it like switching from football training camp to training for wrestling?

AA: Patna, it's been a wild ride at the Combat Corner and it's been a whole lotta fun, but if you know Armani Avery you know that I'm finna touch the sky every time out. I love my fans at CCW but I feel like I have something to bring to a bigger audience and they got something I need, namtalmbout?

So this Brass Ring, it feels like destiny to me.

I don't care who they put in front of me ... I'm running through their chest to get that Brass Ring. I'm running through their chest and grabbing that Brass Ring and taking that contract for the AWA. I feel like this tournament was meant for me.

MS: Well, we're about to see if you can break out. Any last words for the people?

[Avery spins his chair so he is looking into the two-shot camera. It zooms in close on him as he plucks his glasses off his face and tucks them into the breast pocket of his tight wool jacket.]

AA: I wanna say this... Tommy D, I'm a finally take Michaelson's advice and say thank you for giving me the runway to the top. I didn't know it then but I damn sure know it now, twin, that if you didn't cut me I wouldn't be standing on the verge of becoming the biggest athlete on the planet. So thank you, brotha.

[Avery tilts his head and smiles directly into the camera with his million dollar smile.]

"DING!"

[Stegglet looks around confused where the sound came from while Avery pulls down his glasses and winks at the 4th wall.]

MS: What is that?

AA: Don't worry bout that, Steggy. It happens whenever I smile. I'm so fresh and so clean.

[And with that, we fade back to the studio panel.]

SLB: A fan favorite for sure whenever he appears for Combat Corner Wrestling - Armani Avery is in the Brass Ring Tournament and for that young man, I feel the sky's the limit. Shark?

MB: Absolutely. I've had the pleasure of seeing this kid develop from someone who literally didn't know a wristlock from a wristwatch to essentially being at the top of his class at the Combat Corner to becoming one of the highlights of the night each

and every time he steps into a CCW ring. The fans who haven't seen him in action are in for a real treat, I promise you that.

[Westerly interjects.]

VW: The kid's got talent... he's got charisma... he's got marketability... but just like we talked about Will Robinson and that career-threatening injury, when I see Armani Avery flying inside, outside, and all around the ring, I think it's just a matter of time before he suffers an injury... and he might not be as lucky as Robinson to come back from it.

SDW: That's a risk we all face in there, Miss Westerly... ask your boy James Lynch about it sometime. But Armani Avery has got it all - the talent, the talkin'... and he's got that IT Factor. This is a kid who could be a future superstar buddin' before our very eyes and I can't wait to see what he does in this tournament.

SLB: Alright, fans... we're down to the final six in our tournament and coming up next, we're back to the women's side of the bracket. The AWA has always been known for legacy talent... superstars whose fathers, mothers, uncles, whatever were a professional wrestler. The bloodline out there is strong in the AWA locker room and it's no different in this tournament as we get set to look at a pair of second generation superstars. First up, when you talk about professional wrestling in the Northeastern United States in the mid-70s or so, there are a handful of significant names that'll come to mind... and right up at the top of that list has gotta be the great Jose Liriano. The Puerto Rican fireplug who lit up crowd all over the biggest territory in the business at that time. And to hear tell of it, his great niece Isabella has picked up right in his legendary footsteps.

[Blackwell grins as we fade to Isabella Liriano sitting in front of the CCW backdrop. She's wearing her brown hair tied up in a pony tail and wearing a CCW T-shirt.]

IL: Six months ago, my Great Uncle, Jose Liriano, passed away.

A legend in Puerto Rico, a Legend in the Northeast.

His brother Joaquin, my Abeulo, the stories he'd tell....

[Liriano smiles at the memory.]

IL: How mi tío abuelo Jose would light up Madison Square Garden, all 20,000 people standing and cheering everything he did.

And when he retired and came back to the island, he'd sit and listen to abuelo with the same attention we all did. I loved listening to the stories, I loved Jose.

Mi papá, he wasn't interested in wrestling, but me, I watched everything I could. And when I got to the right age... well, I'm thankful, that tio Jose was there to start me off.

[She smiles, wiping the start of a tear away.]

IL: I got a lot to live up to with the name. And yeah, there are people that aren't super familiar with Jose Liriano outside of Puerto Rico and New York, but I'm going to change that.

Some of us in this tournament, people I've been training with and facing for the last year in CCW. Others, big names from all over. Others, people from other families that everyone knows. And that's just fine with me.

[She shrugs.]

IL: And yeah, I don't have the pedigree of Lily or Catalina, or the rep of AKANE and Shinza, or the following of Jo Jo, or the need that's driving Riley.

I just have the Liriano fire, the stories, and the training of one of the best to ever do it.

I'm coming for the Brass Ring, and there's nothing that's going to stop me from getting there.

[She pumps a fist excitedly before we fade back to the studio panel.]

SLB: Isabella Liriano looking to extend her family's legacy in this Brass Ring Tournament! Shark, tell us about this young lady.

[Broussard nods.]

MB: For students of the game, Isabella Liriano is the walking spitting image... underneath... as her great uncle, Jose. She's got the fire. She's got the focus and determination. She's got the ring style that gets the fans on their feet and roaring. This is a young lady who has dedicated her life to making sure the name "Liriano" lives on in pro wrestling history alongside all the greats we talk about all the time. It's a tough hill to climb. She's got a long road to fight her way up and... she really hasn't been competing for all that long. She came to the Combat Corner on a developmental deal in early 2017... and now she's got a shot to grab that Brass Ring.

SLB: Will her inexperience be an issue for her, Veronica?

[Westerly shrugs.]

VW: Probably, yeah. You never know though. Some people are born to be a part of the business and have that pro wrestling blood pumping through their hearts on Day One. She could surprise a lot of people. She's old school, Blackwell. We've got so many second generation wrestlers whose parents were a part of the business in the 90s or 2000s. Jose Liriano was a big name in the 70s... so she'll have learned this sport a completely different way from people like Ryan Martinez or Julie Somers. Honestly, I'm excited to see what she brings to the table.

SLB: Speaking of second generation talent though, last week, one wrestler grabbed everyone's attention and turned some heads in a way that no one could ignore. I'm talking about the one and only, Catalina Lopez! On Showtime, we watched as she introduced herself to AWA audiences wielding a FLAMETHROWER to burn the other seven female competitors of the Brass Ring Tournament in effigy! Honestly, who does that? But I guess we'll find out today, because she's here in studio!"

[The camera pans to Marcus Broussard, who shakes his head dismissively.]

MB: A flamethrower? Please, Lou. That's not wrestling. That's a gimmick, a flashy distraction. We need to see substance in that ring, not just theatrics.

[Sweet Daddy Williams chuckles.]

SDW: Hey now, I ain't mad at it. It caught my eye! I like that she's got a little flair. A little style.

SLB: Veronica, your thoughts?

[Veronica Westerly remains stoic, folding her arms, offering no response.]

VW: No comment.

SLB: Well, one thing's for sure—she knows how to make an entrance. Earlier today, Catalina showed up in—wait for it—a pink hearse. That's right, folks. Let's take a look at her arrival.

[Cut to footage of a pink hearse driving up to the studio building. The driver's side door pops open and we see the gigantic form of Catalina Lopez stepping out, dressed in a short black tulle dress and a veil over her face. The camera zooms in on her as she walks towards the studio, the heels of her black stilettos clicking against the pavement in a perfect, synchronized rhythm as she approaches. We then cut back to the studio, where the panel is waiting for her. Broussard grumbles.]

MB: Seriously? A hearse? This is the kind of nonsense we're dealing with? This isn't Halloween. This is wrestling. Where's her focus?

[Just then, Catalina Lopez strides into the studio, her immense physical presence immediately filling the room as she takes a seat with the panel. She lifts her veil, revealing her beautiful yet unbothered expression.]

SLB: Catalina! Welcome to the show. I've got to ask, what's with the get-up? Are you here to mourn or wrestle?

CL: Oh, Lou, I'm here to mourn... to mourn for all of the fading hopes and dreams of the seven lovely women who think they stand a chance against me in the Brass Ring Tournament!

[Sweet Daddy chuckles.]

SDW: I like the attitude! A little dark, but you've got style.

[Broussard frowns, folding his arms, a look of disdain on his face.]

MB: Here we go again with the theatrics. Really? What are you trying to sell here? I mean, you can wear all the black dresses you want, but at the end of the day, it's about what you can do in that ring. And so far, all I've seen is a bunch of flash and noise, and I'm not buying it.

[Catalina tilts her head slightly, her voice changing from sweet to sharp.]

CL: Oh, Mister Broussard, I really wish you wouldn't try to fit me into a box. Does every wrestler really need to be a...

[She raises her fingers into the air and makes air quotes.]

CL: ... "serious" person with single-minded, psychotic focus on being the greatest wrestler in the world? So what if I wear a tiny black dress on gigantic, physically immaculate Amazonian body, make a couple grand entrances and wielded a flamethrower? I did it precisely because it's the complete opposite of what you expect from a hyper-focused "serious" person. It's fun. It's exciting.

[Lopez slams a hand down on the table, startling the panel.]

CL: But don't let the theatrics fool you. Do not let the fact that I'm a loveable, huggable, adorable, mesmerizing, paralyzing bundle of sunshine and rainbows distract you. Once that bell rings and I step into that ring, I'm a six-foot-five human

cheat code designed to break anyone who dares to stand across from me. I don't need to scream or yell to be taken seriously, because when the match starts, my opponents will need to take me seriously or else their hopes and dreams will be burned to the ground faster than that flamethrower I used last week.

[Broussard crosses his arms, unconvinced.]

MB: You're saying all the right things, Catalina-

CL: Call me Cat!

[Broussard ignores her.]

MB: -But where's the consistency? You can't let every little whim guide you in this sport. You can't do things just because they're fun and exciting and you're physically imposing, so who cares about the other guy across the ring. What happens when the real competition comes for you? Can you handle the pressure, or are you just a pretty face with a flair for the dramatic?

CL: You don't need to worry about me, Mister Broussard. When the pressure comes, I won't be the one folding under it. When the dust settles, it'll be my opponents who will be crushed by that pressure. Or maybe they'll just be crushed beneath my boot.

[She titters.]

CL: I'm not picky.

[Veronica Westerly, who's been quiet up until now, finally speaks, her tone cool and calm.]

VW: I can't deny that you've got physical gifts, Catalina. You're big. You're strong. You've got the look. And believe me, I know all about big, strong giants with the look, in this business. But I'm skeptical about your character. Can you really back up all that flash with true substance? I have some doubts.

[Catalina smirks.]

CL: Please understand I'm not here just to participate, I'm here to dominate. If I were you, Rhoni, I'd start getting comfortable with the idea of being wrong.

[Sweet Daddy Williams cackles, as Lou grins, enjoying the back and forth. Even Marcus Broussard smirks and shakes his head at Catalina's boldness.]

SLB: Well, there you have it folks. Catalina Lopez is not just here to play, she's here to win. And by the looks of it, she's not backing down from anyone. She's got a big personality to match her big physical gifts, but I gotta ask... how far will that take her?

[The camera zooms in on Catalina as she leans back in her chair, grinning.]

CL: As far as I want it to, Lou! As far as I want it to!

[The panel exchanges glances, uncertain but intrigued by the giantess.]

SLB: Catalina Lopez, ladies and gentlemen...

[Lopez gets up, nodding to the camera as she makes her exit.]

SLB: ...and now, let's run it back to the men's side of the bracket for the final two members of the men's Brass Ring Tournament! First, we're heading to another part of our studio where our good friend Mark Stegglet is standing by with a familiar face to our fans who recently watched our Battle of London event... Mark?

[We fade to another part of the studio where Mark Stegglet stands, microphone in hand, in front of a backdrop with a repeating pattern of the AWA Brass Ring logo...]

MS: Thanks team!. Everyone's looking forward to this premier tournament showcasing some of the newest and best talent in the industry right now. Let's take a moment to get to know some one the participants of the Brass Ring, all the way from Birmingham, England, The Crusherweight, Adrian Kirk!

[Adrian Kirk steps into the shot. Dressed in a dark grey three piece suit, Kirk is not too much taller than Stegglet, with a medium build for a wrestler. His black hair is roughly shoulder length, but brushed back off his face and kept there with some manner of product. His face provides a narrative describing many of his past fights: His nose is crooked, his eyebrows are interrupted by scars, and his ears are rather cauliflowered. He looks at Stegglet in a manner similar to a bouncer sizing up a drunk. Suddenly, he cracks a smile...]

AK: Well, well... Mr. Stegglet. It is an honor to make your acquaintance.

[Kirk's voice drips with sarcasm, but applied with the subtlety of an artist. As such, Mark Stegglet completely misses it.]

MS: Likewise, Mr. Kirk! We're happy to have you here in the AWA for the Brass Ring tournament! How are you feeling going into this once in a lifetime opportunity?

AK: Me? Oh, I'm over the moon. I've been given the chance to show the world what I can do in that ring and prove to the world what I've known for years: Nobody can hold a candle to me.

MS: That brings up an interesting point. After the video package we saw of you recently, some have mentioned that maybe you seem... overconfident about your chances in the tournament. Maybe you could elaborate on why that is?

AK: Overconfident? I'd say I'm just confident enough. I'll give you two reasons, real quick...

[He holds up both fists.]

AK: ...One and two. Listen, I realize that maybe the AWA doesn't know much about me. That's fair. You call me overconfident because you're not familiar with my work. Frankly it doesn't matter to me in the slightest whether anyone believes me or not. In a little while, everyone will see me get into that ring and dominate. Then you can come talk to me about whether I'm being overconfident or just telling you the truth.

[The Crusherweight smirks]

AK: In the meantime, you'll just have to ask anyone who's seen me fight across the pond... Or maybe you can ask them at the Combat Corner about me. They'll all tell you the same thing: Adrian Kirk is not a man to be trifled with.

MS: Well, that's pretty direct. So what can we expect from you in the ring in your first round of the tournament?

AK: [Irritated look] Expect? Well, Mister Stegglet, I suppose you should prepare yourself for a dazzling display of pugilistic excellence, hey? Floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee, yeah? A technical clinic the likes of which nobody has ever

seen. Maybe my army of Kirk-amaniacs can help lead me to victory? What do you think?

MS: I... I think maybe you're not being entirely serious right now?

AK [Feigning surprise]: Well, look at you, Stegglet, sharp as a tack. Fine, let me be serious, then... Here's what you can expect from me in the first round: I'm going to get into that ring, and I'm going to cause some bloke to have the most miserable night in his professional career. I am one of the most vicious competitors to ever lace up a pair of boots, and after my first round victory, the AWA is going to know it. After I win the tournament, the whole world will know.

[Adrian smirks again]

AK: To be honest with you, Stegglet, I actually feel sorry for my first opponent because they have no idea what they're facing. Nobody in the AWA knows what I'm capable of. Well...

[Kirk turns to stare straight into the camera, which zooms in.]

AK: ...I know EXACTLY what I'm capable of... and trust me, it ain't a pretty sight. THAT'S why I'm confident.

MS: Wh... what are you capable of?

[Kirk, still looking into the camera, sneers]

AK: Absolute crushing victory, mate. That's what I'm capable of.

[Kirk stares into the camera for an intense moment, then suddenly turns to Stegglet again with a big smile]

AK: So don't you go and miss any of that match, yeah? You'll like what you see, I guarantee it. We'll make you the first member of the Nation of Kirk-Menistan. It'll be a blast!

MS [Confused]: I... okay? I don't know what that is?

AK [Pats Mark on the shoulder]: It's alright mate, you just keep doing your thing and we'll get you sorted out. Just don't operate any heavy machinery, yeah?

[Kirk takes a moment to look at Stegglet's confused expression, chuckles, and then steps out of the shot. Stegglet is left, still looking bewildered.]

MS: Heavy machinery? What? Er...

[Stegglet breaks his confusion and pastes on his go-to smile]

MS: So there you have it, folks, The Crusherweight, Adrian Kirk. We're looking forward to seeing just what he's capable of...

[...Off camera, we hear Kirk shout "ABSOLUTE CRUSHING VICTORY!"]

MS [smiles awkwardly] There you go! Back to you in the studio, team!

[Fade back to the studio panel.]

SLB: Adrian Kirk seemed to be having a little fun there with our friend Mark Stegglet, Shark.

MB: Yeah, but he'll be all business when he gets in the ring... and NO ONE will be having fun then. He's a brutal, vicious, sadistic individual who does all the little things to hurt his opponent. Internationally known, respected, AND feared... Adrian Kirk is a guy who might shock a lot of people in this tournament.

VW: His size is going to make the people think he can't go the distance but you and I know differently, Marcus.

MB: That's right.

VW: This is a man who has already battled - and defeated most of the time - some of the best wrestlers on the independent scene all over the world. He's got the skill AND the attitude to go all the way.

SLB: And with that, we've come to the final member of the men's side of the Brass Ring tournament bracket - Gabriel Cordova. A long-standing member of Combat Corner Wrestling, a lot of people have described this as his final opportunity to break through to the main roster. Marcus Broussard, do you agree with that assessment.

[Broussard grimaces.]

MB: You never like to see someone with true talent without a job, right? Gabriel Cordova has that talent. He's incredibly talented in fact... but circumstances... whether it was timing or attitude or... whatever it is... have kept him stuck down in CCW with me for a long time now. So, maybe... yeah. Maybe this is his last chance. Maybe if he doesn't get the job done here, it's best for everyone if we part ways and give him the chance to succeed somewhere else. It's not my decision to make... but if anyone asks, that'd be my thought.

SLB: That puts so much pressure on this young man... it's hard to imagine what's going through his head. Our own Mariah Wolfe caught him with him backstage at a CCW event recently though so let's listen in...

[We fade through black...

...and the scene opens with a shot of the busy backstage area of a wrestling show. Crew members are moving around, preparing for an upcoming event. The camera then cuts to a small, quiet interview set. There, we see Mariah Wolfe standing in front of a backdrop showcasing the Brass Ring Tournament logo. She is dressed in professional attire, holding a microphone in hand, and looking directly into the camera.]

MW: Welcome, everyone, to a special interview here backstage on location with Combat Corner Wrestling! We've heard a lot of talk about the participants in the Brass Ring Tournament this year, but one name that keeps coming up—one that's been making waves since his return—is Gabriel Cordova. And today, we have the man himself here to talk about his journey, his transformation, and his outlook on what's ahead. Gabriel, thanks for joining us.

[The camera cuts to Cordova, sitting across from Mariah. His appearance is striking: dark, wavy hair cascading to his shoulders, his muscles more defined than ever, and his eyes burning with a quiet intensity. He's dressed in a fitted white "Combat Corner" t-shirt and black Adidas track pants. He exudes confidence, but there's a calmness to him.]

MW: Gabriel, the last time we saw you in the Brass Ring Tournament, things didn't exactly go as planned. You were close, but ultimately, it ended in disappointment. But this time around, you've made it clear that you're not the same guy we saw two years ago. What's changed for you since then?

[Cordova leans forward slightly, his gaze unwavering as he considers the question.]

GC: You're right. Last time, I came so close. I had all the talent, all the potential in the world... but I wasn't ready. I wasn't mentally prepared and I sure as hell wasn't physically prepared for what it takes to win this tournament. I walked into that tournament thinking I was entitled to success, thinking I could just coast on my natural gifts, but it's not just handed to you, Mariah. You have to earn it.

[He exhales slowly, shaking his head as if pushing aside the past.]

GC: I didn't understand that back then, and I paid the price. But this time... it's different. *I'm* different.

[Mariah nods, intrigued by the sincerity in his voice.]

MW: That's a pretty dramatic shift. What exactly did you do to get to this point? How did you turn things around?"

[Cordova smiles, but it's not a smile of arrogance—it's one of calm confidence, tempered with humility.]

GC: I stopped thinking that I could just skip to the top without putting in the work. These past two years have been about rebuilding myself from the ground up. I've gotten stronger. I've gotten faster. But more importantly, I've gotten smarter. I've learned what it means to think in the ring. I've learned how to truly outlast my opponents—not just surviving, but dominating. I stopped running from the grind, and I've spent every moment since then pushing myself further than I ever thought I could go

[He pauses, letting the weight of his words hang in the air.]

GC: And this tournament? It's not about redemption. It's about proving that all that work wasn't for nothing. That I didn't just survive—I thrived. And now, I'm ready to grab that Brass Ring and make it mine.

[Mariah smiles, impressed by Cordova's words.]

MW: Powerful words, Gabriel. But I've got to ask—this tournament is filled with competitors, each with their own motivations and strengths. You've got a lot of heavy hitters in this field. What makes you different this time around? Why should everyone be worried about you?"

[Cordova's expression hardens, and the intensity in his eyes only grows. There's no arrogance, just raw conviction.]

GC: I'm not the same guy who walked into that ring two years ago, Mariah. That guy was hungry, but he was reckless. He wasn't disciplined. He had the tools, but he didn't know how to use them. Now? I'm a weapon. I've spent the last two years refining every single aspect of myself. I've transformed my body into the ultimate machine. And my mind? My mind is sharper than ever.

[Cordova shifts his weight slightly, his expression turning focused. He leans in as if speaking directly to his potential opponents.]

GC: I'm not taking anything away from the other men in this tournament. You've got veterans like Elijah Wilde who have been wrestling all over the world for over a decade. You have a former MMA champion like Danny King. You have a force of nature like Rodrick Storm. You have one of the best in the world today in Will Robinson. I can keep going on and on about these guys...

[Cordova's tone becomes more intense as he continues speaking.]

GC: ... But here's the thing: When it comes down to it, they can talk about their experience, size, skill or whatever else they've got, but none of them have the _hunger_ that I have now. None of them are as _focused_ as I am. None of them have the sheer _determination_ that I do. I'm not the "young guy" in the Brass Ring Tournament anymore...

...I'm the _threat._

[He pauses, looking directly into the camera, almost as if he's sending out a direct warning to all the other wrestlers in the field.]

GC: This time, I'm walking out of this tournament with the Brass Ring. I'm not asking for it. I'm TAKING it. No more excuses. No more second chances. This time, the only name you're going to remember at the end is mine.

[Mariah smiles, impressed with the fire Cordova is showing. She nods thoughtfully.]

MW: Well, there you have it, folks! Gabriel Cordova is not just back, he's ready to win! With a new outlook, a new body, and a new mindset, it looks like the Brass Ring Tournament may have a new top contender. Stay tuned, because it's going to be a wild ride!

[The camera pulls back as Cordova stands up, walking off confidently as we fade through black to the studio panel...]

SDW: Now that's confidence! This kid's been fightin' for two years to get this chance again... it's hard to imagine he's gonna let it slip past him again, baby.

SLB: A new focus, a new body, and a new Gabriel Cordova as he looks to live up to the hype bestowed on him by so many people so many years ago, Veronica.

[Westerly sighs.]

VW: It can be hard to live with the hype... not live up to it... live with it. Gabriel Cordova was the Internet darling two... three years ago. He was the name that people wanted to see get an AWA contract. He was the name they daydreamed about climbing into the ring with the best in the world. He was... what was it? The guy that Juan Vasquez said was the best wrestler you've never heard of? That's a hard thing to live with. That puts added pressure on you... it puts added eyeballs on you with their own set of pressure... it puts you in a place where if you fail, the whole world's going to know about it and that's even more pressure... more weight. But you know what's harder than living with the hype, Blackwell?

SLB: What's that?

VW: Living without it. Cordova got oh-so-close to the Brass Ring two years ago, fell short, and then became... no one. He was forgotten about. When's the last time you've seen someone clamoring online for him to get his break? When's the last time they were talking about dream matches with him and the top AWA superstars? When's the last time someone like Vasquez has dropped his name?

SLB: It's been a while.

VW: Exactly. And that can be even harder to live with than the pressure. Gabriel Cordova's got a different kind of pressure on him now because like we've said, a failure here means the last two years were for nothing... and there's a decent

chance his career is... well, maybe not over but drastically altered. I'll be watching to see if that pressure turns him into a diamond... or dust.

[Blackwell nods.]

SLB: Eight men in the tournament! Only one Brass Ring - one full time AWA contract - to grab! Who will it be? We'll find out soon enough... but for the last time tonight, let's kick it over to the women's side of the bracket to run down the final two participants there.

MB: And instead of you tossing it to us, Lou, I think we have to turn to you for the next competitor.

SDW: Mmm. The man with the intel... the man with the informants. The AWA man in Havana, daddy.

SLB: Now, the team in Combat Corner asked her to send some comments about the Brass Ring tournament, and her reply: she said that everything she wanted to say was in the teaser she sent us on Showtime a while back.

VW: Pfft. Typical Gen Z. Sounds just like Truth Marie.

SLB: Well, you are correct there: AKANE is the youngest competitor in the bracket, the only one born after the year 2000, and you may correct me if I am wrong, but she will be the youngest competitor to have ever stepped foot in an AWA ring.

MB: But that's not the whole story, Lou. We've seen footage of the few matches she's had, and she's like a tornado when that bell rings-

SDW: Cute as a button, stings like a scorpion.

MB: And her ring awareness... that takes years of seasoning to learn ring awareness and confidence like she has.

VW: Almost like she was born into the business, maybe.

SLB: Well, I don't know if my sources are going to satisfy your curiosity or disappoint you further, but it seems a lot about AKANE is hiding in plain sight. Everything that I've learned about her just seems to raise more questions, gang.

[The panel's microphone stay live as footage of AKANE (or whoever she is outside of the ring) plays over top. In this footage, she looks like a young woman with blond hair with chunky blue highlights and deep, dark brown mischievous eyes on a Twitch stream, playing 'Octopath Traveler', a pair of headphones with cat ears over her head..]

SLB: Because as our online fans have deduced, she's active on Twitch, Instagram and YouTube. And she seems quite successful on every platform.

[Some footage of AKANE sitting at a kitchen counter with a rice cooker and a few bottles of spices in front of her, in what seems to be a home shot instructional video.]

SLB: Video gaming, influencer, and on YouTube, she makes videos about being an English-speaker living in Tokyo. And as you can hear, she speaks English and Japanese fluently, like someone who has been living in both countries all her life. Now... she's very, very coy about revealing details about her family life.

VW: So we don't know if she's a second-generation talent or not.

SLB: Exactly. She goes by 'Sorrell Onishi,' or alternately 'Sorrell Clermont.' Now, I don't know any wrestlers with the surnames 'Onishi' or 'Clermont,' so I can't rule anything out. But we have determined that she has an athletic background... as a figure skater.

MB: So she could be a young Tonya Harding for all we know.

SDW: I don't think she even knows who Tonya Harding is, Shark.

VW: So, I'm sorry, but... yeah... a lot of what's going on here doesn't make any sense. This Sorrell girl set up for success, and then all of a sudden, when she turns eighteen, she decides out of the blue to become a pro wrestler? That doesn't make any sense.

[Cut to footage of AKANE charging across the ring—a neon rainbow tinted blur—with a kick to an opponent's face.]

SLB: My sources tried asking her why she's scaled back on her other ventures to become the "Avenging Angel," or as she likes to call herself, "The One They Call The Witch." She's been asked about it on her recent Twitch streams, and all she has replied with is cryptic comments about "free will."

[Sweet Daddy interrupts, reacting to a particularly nasty series of kicks from AKANE to an opponent's hip and thigh that makes the wailing Joshi crumble to the mat.]

SDW: Ooh, Daddy, those kicks'll make you cry the blues all night!

MB: No doubt, Sweet Daddy. Now, while AKANE has been as successful in the ring as she has been in just about all her other ventures... In my mind, she's untested. These have been other rookies she's been matched with, right Lou?

SLB: That has been her career so far.

MB: So if she gets to the AWA and a Felicia Love could upset her, or if she crosses a Big Boss Shinza, or Catalina Lopez—imagine that size mismatch!

SDW: Oh, she's gonna need a stepladder for that one!

SLB: Well, one thing's for sure—she is not difficult to overlook as you can see here...

[The panel reacts as we cut to a promotional shot of AKANE in her ring gear.]

MB: Yikes!

SDW: Do not adjust your set!

[AKANE's ring gear resembles an explosion in a rainbow factory, with a halter top and arm sleeves made of a patchwork of brightly colored clashing fabrics in reds, pinks, yellows, greens and more. She has yellow and black striped shorts and kneepads, and bright orange boots with neon green kickpads. A single kumadori line painted across her face, which peeks out mischievously behind the blank, expressionless noh theatre mask she holds in front of her.]

VW: I... I swear I've seen that Cheshire Cat grin before. Something about those eyes. I've seen those before. And the way she talks... the cadence in her voice. I've heard someone talk like she does before. It's on the tip of my tongue...

MB: Truth Marie's long lost colorblind older sister?

VW: Don't start with me, Shark.

[Blackwell chuckles as the shot comes back to him.]

SLB: Nevertheless, the mystery will become a little clearer, I suspect, when we finally see her in action in...

[He pauses, throwing a hand over his mouth.]

SLB: ...almost blew it there. We've got one more competitor to discuss and then I promise you, fans, you will not want to miss our special guest and his special announcement.

MB: What's that all about?

SLB: Mum's the word, Marcus. Almost there though. And speaking of "almost there," our final competitor tonight is someone who has often seemed "almost there" when it comes to breaking out of the independent scene and into the big leagues over the years but just has not caught that lucky break... yet. Could now be the time? Let's hear from Miss Bennett right now and we'll be right back to discuss her chances.

[We fade to black... and a voice.]

"Yes. Yes Doc. *sigh* Yes Doc, ya betcha. I got it, Doc, I promise. Thank you, sir!"

[There's a lot of "I gotta get out of here, come on, let's move along" exasperation from Riley Bennett as she backs out of what is presumably a doctor's office. She ducks out and quickly closes the door. She leans against the wall, taking a deep breath and smirking. As a reminder, Riley doesn't strike the impression you'd think of when you presume what a female talent might look like. Her portly form is tucked under a non descript grey hoodie, thick but strong legs wrapped in denim shorts and topped (bottomed?) by a pair of work boots. Her brown hair is tied back, showing off a rough forehead, patterned with scars from wrestling shows where she poured buckets for a hot dog and a handshake somewhere in Kentucky.]

RB: Bad news, Doc says I should try and lose a bit of weight. Everything else is good, even this ol' cat's heart and lungs. I passed all the vitals 'n all that, whate'er that means but yeah, he says mum's gotta lose a bit. Natty Lites from now on I guess. Still ain't believin' I just saw an AWA doc to make sure it's all good for the Brass Ring. Shi... Hell. Oops, hell, I meant hell Sorry, is hell a swear? I ain't ne'er had the prettiest words. I ain't the prettiest girl on the block either so just goes with the territory, ya know? Alley cat's always gonna be an alley cat as my nana used to say. Oh, the smile she'd sneak in behind my mums back if she saw where we was.

[Wistful sigh.]

RB: But hey, Brass Ring time and yer old lady is in some shark infested waters I tells ya. I don't just do wrasslin' for fun. I ain't working in armories all over the place for nothin'. I love wrestling! I really do! And then I see the other girls in the Brass Ring with mamma and... lord help me. Big Boss?

[She whistles loudly.]

RB: I went to Japan a couple times and saw her up and close. I tell ya, she's a mean one. Hits like a truck! Then there's that Catalina Lopez. I thought I was strong. I ain't got nothin' on her... well, I will pull her hair and gouge her eyes but she's a scary broad too.

And then there's Jo Jo. I feel you, lady. I do. Let's hope we get a round and change what the world thinks about women in wrestling. I think we could be good buds, Jo Jo. Hell, maybe the AWA needs a team like us. Two big ol' lovable broads just smilin' and fightin' and openin' minds and changin' standards. But that's enough flirtin' for now.

[She does "the eyebrows" and smooches the air.]

RB: But ya see, before that, before the Brass Ring starts I gotta do some real work. Get runnin'... walkin'... prolly somewhere between. Taking care of my girls and mum. Working more then I want or wish I had 'ta but I gotta pay some bills. But who knows, maybe one day this ol' alley cat gets her shine and doesn't have to work in some bingo hall if I don't wanna and can travel a bit and show my girls some good birthdays like I ne'er had, fill up that tree at Christmas, maybe get a big ole turkey or two. Make my pretties some memories they'll have forever and it's all thanks to the AWA givin' me a chance.

And you give me a chance, I am gonna take it, I ain't gonna miss and this girl, this girl who needs to lose a bit of weight, who was told she wasn't pretty enough for the tube, who was forced into bleedin' and brawlin' to get on shows... well, she's gonna have her claws out and climb to the very top.

Rawr.

[And with that, we fade from a smiling Riley Bennett back to our studio panel.]

SDW: And how do you not love her?

VW: It's pretty easy actually.

[Williams shakes his head.]

SDW: A hard-working single mom fightin' for a better life for her kids... her mom... she's got the kind of story that people all over these here United States can related to and rally behind. She's gotta be a sentimental pick for a whole lotta people for sure.

VW: And that's my problem with her, Williams. She IS a sentimental pick because she's playing on everyone's emotions. She's the poor, out-of-shape, pathetic single mom who's coming into this thing on a wing and a prayer to fight her way out of poverty and into a brand new day. She wants us to feel sorry for her so that we cheer her on. I spent years of my life essentially as a single mother as Caleb continued to destroy his body for a quick fix... and you never hear me crying about it for pity's sake.

SLB: So, I'm guessing Riley Bennett is not a fit for the Westerly Dynasty.

VW: She's a fit to get drunk, eat a tub of popcorn, and watch re-runs of Dynasty... but not a damn thing about her deserves to be mentioned next to my name, Blackwell.

SLB: She certainly has become a crowd favorite though. Responses to her words from the online fans have been strong and I expect she'll have plenty of crowd support when she steps into an AWA ring for the first time.

[Blackwell grins.]

SLB: Speaking of which... that's our field of sixteen competitors, all eagerly waiting for the Brass Ring Tournament to begin. So, I take you now to AWA co-owner Jon Stegglet... and a very special guest... who have some news for us on when this

tournament will begin and how we'll see it play out this summer. Jon, are you there?

[We cut to a split screen shot for a moment, establishing Blackwell on one side of the screen and Jon Stegglet on the other. Stegglet smiles, standing in a charcoal grey suit.]

JS: Yeah, I hear you, Lou.

SLB: Alright then... as you've seen here today, we've heard from and discussed the chances of our sixteen competitors heading into the Brass Ring Tournament... and now, I'm told you've got some news for us.

[Stegglet nods his head.]

JS: That's right, Lou. I'm here tonight to let our fans know the schedule for this upcoming tournament.

[A graphic comes up to support the info being read to us.]

JS: The tournament will officially begin on Saturday, June 2nd, at Showtime from The Temple in Boyle Heights, California with first round action. The first round will continue on June 16th in Portland, 30th in Seattle, and July 7th in Regina. We'll see the Semifinals on July 21st in Winnipeg and August 4th at the Mall of America in Minnesota... and the Finals, as promised, will go down on September 1st in the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City. It's going to be a huge event all summer long and we can't wait for our great fans to be a part of it.

SLB: Hey Jon?

JS: Yes sir?

SLB: I can't help but notice that the tournament is no longer beginning when the summer tour begins - on May 19th in Reseda.

JS: That's right. With Memorial Day Mayhem taking place the following weekend, we didn't want the beginning of the tournament to be completely overshadowed by our big Dodger Stadium event. So, we decided to start a week later in Boyle Heights.

SLB: But we've heard rumors that our participants have been asked to be in Reseda and be ready to compete.

[Stegglet grins.]

JS: And for the answer to that... I'll hand things over to the special host of that event in Reseda...

[You can almost hear the non-existent crowd cheer as a grinning Juan Vasquez steps into view, clapping Stegglet on the shoulder.]

JV: Sweet Lou!

SLB: Juan Vasquez, now THIS is a surprise!

JV: I'm glad to see that after all these years, I can still outcoop ya.

[Blackwell chuckles.]

JV: So, when Steggs here came to me and said that he was moving the tournament a couple of weeks, I knew we had to find a way to get these competitors on the show in Reseda because if I were them, right now I'd be hungry... nah, nah... STARVING... to show the world what I can do. So, I decided to give them that chance.

First, for the men...

[He pauses.]

JV: The men will take part in an eight man tag team match... four on four... to get everyone some skin in the game...

[Vasquez grins.]

JV: ...and for the women, we're going to give the world a sneak preview of the Memorial Day Rumble. An eight woman over-the-top rope Battle Royal... and to the winner of that one...

[Dramatic pause.]

JV: ...a parting gift from yours truly... the winner gets a spot in the Rumble itself!

[You can hear the rippling buzz rolling across our studio panel.]

SLB: Wow! That's huge news right there! You're saying that the winner of the eight woman Battle Royal will earn themselves a chance to compete at Dodger Stadium in front of the whole world?

JV: That's exactly right, amigo... and not only that, they're going to earn themselves a chance to WIN the Rumble and lock in a guaranteed Women's World Title match at Girls To The Front later this summer!

SLB: "Huge" might not be a big enough word to describe the size of that news, Juan Vasquez! Our thanks to you and you as well, Jon, for gracing this Brass Ring Roundup with-

[Stegglet interjects.]

JS: One more thing, Lou... if that wasn't reason enough to tune into Showtime in two weeks, then I'll add one more carrot to the pile... LIVE from Reseda, we will be announcing the bracket for this tournament!

[Blackwell grins as the split screen fades, leaving a shot of our studio panel.]

SLB: Big news all around from Jon Stegglet and Juan Vasquez and... Shark, final thoughts?

[Broussard shakes his head with a smile.]

MB: The Rumble is one of the AWA's featured events every year, Lou... and to be able to earn a spot to compete in that... in Dodger Stadium... on ESPN... wow. It doesn't get bigger than that.

[Westerly nods.]

VW: It's the chance of a lifetime for those women... but the brackets are coming, Blackwell. Don't forget what this is all about - the Brass Ring and that precious AWA contract!

[And then over to Sweet Daddy Williams.]

SDW: We've been saying it since this thing was announced, baby... this tournament is all about opportunity and our ol' amigo Juan Vasquez just delivered one heck of an opportunity to the sixteen wrestlers in this field. I can't wait!

[Back to Blackwell.]

SLB: Neither can I! It's been one heck of a night here on Brass Ring Roundup on Hulu - your source for all things Brass Ring related. Our next airdate will be announced in the days to come on AWA social media so keep your eyes peeled for that... and for our panel, for Mariah Wolfe and Mark Stegglet, and for myself... until next time, keep your feet on the ground and reaaaaaach for that Brass Ring! So long everybody!

[The audio switches to music as we can see the panel discussing the tournament for a few moments before the studio lights dim and we fade to black.]