WOW ... what an episode of "24" this past Monday. The last 15 minutes were as good as network television gets. Jack went one man wrecking crew on Fayed and his posse, securing the nukes, and ending the conflict ... right? WRONG. Jack's got a new problem. Mitch recaps the episode and takes stock of where things are at on "24".

Jack Bauer once told God he needed access, the event has since been referred to as "The Big Bang ."…

Evidently we now know why last week's episode was so weak: It was competing against a ratings giant (especially amongst guys) in the NCAA basketball tournament (Florida still sucks), and they had to stretch things out a bit before the Big Bang that was coming this week.

I've got to admit it, I never saw things ending up the way they have…at least not this soon. In fact, I was under the opinion that they wouldn't make a second plot line, and the whole suite case nukes thingy would go on all season.

Oops.

But I have no problems being wrong on this one, as I was getting about as cynical as everyone else concerning what had thus far been a very uneven season. However, Monday's episode was just as intense as what we saw in the first four hours, and now that the plot has totally changed, it should be a lot more taut given that Jack only has seven hours to save Audrey.

Best thing about it all? I get to finally re-introduce my trademarked “Those Chinese Bastards!!!®” comments. I had managed to work that phrase into the first eight to ten recaps, but it just became nearly impossible lately, much to my chagrin.

Now TCB!!!® are back, and I’m one happy camper.

Another note: I lamented last week that they left Gredenko’s condition as a cliff-hanger. But later on, I noticed on the Episode Guide for 24 on the Fox web site that they said he collapsed and died. In case you missed it, they made a quick reference to it tonight as Buchanan mentioned it when he was briefing the President.

Recap.

We open back at the White House Bunker, where Wayne Palmer still thinks he can out Jack D. Ripper the vice president, and the missile has just entered Fayedrabia’s air space (I’m sick of saying “Fayed’s country”, like he owns the damn place…time to put a name to it). Lennox and Karen Hayes are freaking out, so Karen tries to get Bill Buchanan to convince Wayne to give CTU more time to interrogate (torture the hell out of) Fayed.

No dice. Wayne’s made up his adrenaline enhanced mind and he’s gonna blow up something unless the ambassador to Fayedrabia gives up some more info.

Two minutes to impact…and the call comes in that Fayedrabia just **happened** to forget to tell Palmer about a certain General Habib, who was giving all kinds of support to Habib. Wayne relents, and orders the missile to be ditched into the Mediterranean. Lennox looks for a change of underwear as he offers to coordinate the recovery of the nuclear warhead. No need, he is told…it was all a big old bluff, and the Ambassador just folded his pocket kings to Wayne’s nothing. Lennox immediately offers to have a uterus installed so that he may bear Wayne’s children.

In Los Angeles, Jack is having the most fun he could possibly have not involving a firearm; beating Fayed to a bloody pulp. Regrettably, they're not getting any information from him, and Jack's knuckles are getting really sore. So Doyle offers to help out. But they are running out of TIME! DAMMIT! So Jack won't allow Doyle to shoot Fayed, instead they load him into a van to take him to CTU for some "pharmaceutical torture". Jack practically purrs to Fayed, "NOW we're going to have some fun." Isn't it great when a man really, really enjoys his work?

Jack isn't paying much attention to the road, and he totally misses the big assed armored truck heading straight towards them. The van rolls, Jack kicks out the windshield, and he and Doyle get shot in the chest. And of course, the stupid kidnappers wouldn't think about CTU guys wearing bullet proof vests, so they don't bother to put an extra bullet into their heads. Needless to say, I wasn't a bit shocked when Jack and Doyle got up. I WAS shocked to find out that it was all staged, and Fayed is now in the hands of three CTU agents pretending to be part of another cell in Fayed's organization. I guess I was surprised since CTU ALWAYS manages to screw up transportation, and figured this was just another in a long line of foul ups, allowing Fayed to make his escape so that Jack would have to take another seven hours to stop him.

Naturally, once I learn they are CTU agents with him, I figure all of them have less than an hour of life remaining. Especially when Fayed demands a gun, and it's given to him. Fayed's a bit suspicious, and demands to talk to General Habib, the man who they said sent them there to rescue him. So Jack has to call the President to convince him to call Fayedrabia and tell the people there to threaten to kill Habib's family if they don't cooperate. Now for us long time fans, we recognize this move from the first season, where Jack staged the death of some Arab terrorist's family to get him to talk. Evidently he's grown tired of pretending, and wants to move straight on to the real thing.

BOREDOM ALERT!!! While waiting for the phone call, we get a few minutes of nausea courtesy of who else but Milo? Seems he didn't like the way Nadia was asking if Doyle was OK after he got a slight cut (probably minor…only 20-30 stitches needed) in the "escape". The geek is jealous, and proceeds to act like a jerk. And I so don't care…except for the fact that they keep giving him lines that could go to the less boring Morris and Chloe.

After I drink a Jaegerbomb to simultaneously dull the senses and perk me back up, Milo is a distant memory, and we're back on task. A bloodied Habib calls Fayed, and tells him that he did indeed send the men for him…while looking over at the two soldiers holding guns to the heads of his sons. But as Nadia handles the translation, she catches what appears to be a distress code. She warns Jack, who calls the agent in charge to alert him…and damn the luck…they just **happened** to have driven into a tunnel and lost coverage right at that very

moment. And then the truck doesn't appear out of the other end of the tunnel. Wow…I never saw THAT coming.

Jack and Doyle arrive, and find that everyone has been shot, and Fayed has escaped. My only question was why the TAC team that "rescued" Fayed all had blanks in their guns…with the exception of the fully loaded Glock they gave Fayed? You, too can be an agent for CTU…assuming you have an IQ lower than Forrest Gump's along with suicidal tendencies.

Speaking of death wishes, I cannot for the life of me figure out why Jack couldn't just hop onto the back of the sanitation truck Fayed hijacked, instead choosing to hide under the truck, where he can get some serious workouts for his biceps as he holds on six inches from the twirling driveshaft.

It will take Fayed between four and five minutes to get to wherever it is in L.A. that he's trying to go, so let's check in at the White House, where Palmer crashes while warning Lennox to 'tell no one", wakes up enough to argue with his doctor, slumps again, and recovers again. Enough of this. It's amusing watching old films of the Godfather of Soul, James Brown pulling that "I'm exhausted…no, I'm NOT!" stunt, but it's getting almost as repetitive as Milo.

Jack has managed to avoid slipping and becoming road kill, and is now in position to radio CTU and tell them Fayed's location. Nah…not nearly macho enough. After hearing Fayed tell the others that they are to proceed immediately to downtown L.A. to blow both remaining bombs, Jack does what he does best.

Kick.

Total.

Ass.

First comes the obligatory jumping of the lone watchman from behind and dispatching him with the obligatory neck snap, including the cool sound effect. He then sneaks in and sees both of the suite cases, five thugs with machine guns, and Fayed. This isn't even CLOSE to a fair fight…those poor terrorists are so screwed. Jack takes about two minutes to kill all five, dodging 2,977 bullets while doing so, and then goes after Fayed. Oh, no! No more bullets! All for the better, as it's time for a fight scene that more than makes up for the lame one between Tony Soprano and Bobby Bacala last night. This one is all macho; rib kicks, elbows to the head, large wrenches to the mid-section, choke holds…which Jack breaks by biting Fayed's hand…head butts, and finally Jack using a hanging chain to block Fayed's wrench.

A hanging chain? I wonder what else that could be used for? How about keeping up with the neck fetish we've had all year, and wrap it around Fayed's throat? Jack then shows why he is the man who makes Chuck Norris look like Richard Simmons in comparison by telling Fayed to "say hello to your brother" with a look of pure evil/joy/vengeance just before he hits the "up" button and Fayed goes to a rather grisly (and quite enjoyable to watch) death.

Hoo-rahh! I was so friggin' pumped up after all that manliness that I crushed an empty beer can on my head, farted, scratched myself, and dared anyone to say anything. No one did…as I was alone in the living room with my dog…but he did look at me like I was either a bastion of manly man-ism…or a raving lunatic. I often confuse those two looks from him.

I'm not the only one impressed, as Doyle shows up a minute later, takes a look around at the carnage, and says the only thing that can be said: "DAMN, Jack!"

So the nukes have been found and the bad guys killed, so looks like things have concluded nicely this year. Except that the show is called "24" and not "17", so we got seven hours to kill yet.

Jack's phone rings, and who is on the line but Audrey! I am soooo surprised she's alive after Marilyn said she was dead. And who is with her but Those Chinese Bastards!!!® Chief TCB!!!® Cheng Zhi grabs the phone away from Audrey and tells Jack if he ever wants to see her alive again, he'll call him back on a secure line.

Ka-chunk

Ka-chunk
Ka-chunk

Final Thoughts.

Most other years, the plot twists have occurred prior to the middle of the season, where we usually see that the “Big Threat” is just a cover for some more elaborate plot. So I’ll give them credit for changing pace on that part at least (leaving only about fifty other things that are completely predictable).

But it does look like Jack gets to go Rouge Agent again next week in his effort to save Audrey. Doyle shouldn’t be pointing a gun at Jack…last time a CTU Chief of Operations did that, Curtis got a neck massage.

Unfortunately, it looks like the side shows during these last seven hours will continue to be the Palmer/Daniels power struggle and the Milo/Nadia soap opera. I’m expecting some internal conflict at CTU once Jack goes out on his own. Maybe Morris will snap Milo’s neck after the geek tries to stop Chloe from re-directed every satellite in existence.

Best Scene: Captain Obvious Time! Of course it’s the scene with Jack taking out seven terrorists.

Jack Bauer Death Count: 24. A huge jump in the count as Jack proved his manhood by taking out an entire terrorist cell single-handedly, including five of them who were firing machine guns at him. Jack’s response? “I’m pissed that my aim was off when I threw my gun at Fayed…but it did give me the chance to send him off with a really cool line.”

The 24 Milk Carton. Have you seen these people? In one case, we actually do finally get some resolution.

Ex President Logan. Who cares? Although since Logan was involved with the whole Chinese

Embassy thing to begin with, he may get back into it again.

Martha Logan. That was IT? Martha and Aaron are just too good of characters for them to only appear in one episode.

Phillip Bauer. If Jack goes Rouge…he may need some of his father's shadowy connections.

The Blue Man Conspiracy Group. Do they have anything to do with the Palmer/Daniels feud?

Marilyn Bauer. Poor Marilyn…soon to join the ranks of Kate Warner and Diane Huxley as women who pine after Jack, only to watch him leave.

Josh Bauer. Just like Diane Huxley's son Derek from last season, Josh will need to be there for his mother as she goes into permanent mourning, never wanting another man after getting dumped by Jack.

Walid. At least they mentioned his name. Seems Sandra is heading back to the hospital to keep an eye on him. Doubtful he'll get any more air time this season.

Audrey Raines. FINALLY, someone is off the milk carton.

Life Expectancy: Unscientific wild assed guesses on how much longer certain people will still be breathing and the chance they have of living through the day. 7 hours to go.

Major changes this week. I was right last week predicting Fayed only had an hour left…but I figured it was because he was captured, and Halil would then take the lead.

Milo – 4 more hours. Hopefully there will be more things going on at CTU while Jack is after Audrey than just the boring soap opera. Chance of living through the day? 75%

Morris – 4 more hours. He could have bled to death at his station two hours ago for all we know. Chance of living through the day? 75%

CTU Agent Johnson – 4 more hours. Doyle doesn't want to shoot Jack, but he wants to shoot someone. Chance of living through the day? 10%

Wayne Palmer – 5 more hours. I have no idea where they are taking this power struggle with Daniels, and how TCB!!!® will play into it. Chance of living through the day? 75%

Phillip Bauer – 6 more hours. That is if he doesn't stay forever on the milk carton. Chance of living through the day? 50%.

Mike Doyle – 6 ½ more hours. I'm leaving him on the list, but I think they're still setting him up to be the main partner of Jack for some time to come. Which means, given the nature of "24" and of Rick Schroeder's usual level of "commitment" to a series…he'll be killed next season. Chance of living through the day? 80%

Cheng Zhi – 6 hours, 45 minutes. He must die…and die an even more gruesome death than Fayed. Chance of living through the day? 10%

Audrey Raines – 6 hours, 55 minutes. Hell, they've repeated so many things from the previous five seasons, why not do a Terri Bauer Repeat? Chance of living through the day? 60%

Off the List.

Fayed – Unlike Bruce Willis leaving too soon when he strung up Alexander Godunov with a chain in “Die Hard”, Jack stuck around to make sure Fayed stayed dead.

Halil – So they threw me a red herring regarding him. I couldn’t even pick him out of a line up while Jack was shooting all of them.