

Monday Nitro – November 17, 1997: The Fighting Before The War

Monday Nitro #114

Date: November 17, 1997

Location: The Crown, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

It's finally time for World War 3 but we have one more Nitro to get through first. Last week was the first time Sting finally got beaten down but we have about five weeks before Starrcade so there's time to make people forget about it. Other than that there isn't much to look forward to this week other than Hennig vs. Luger which was set up last week. Let's get to it.

Here's the NWO to open the show and tick off the announcers. They're here en masse with pretty much every member other than Hogan in the ring. Hall does the survey as the fans chant for Sting. Oh and Syxx isn't there either so Hall gives him a shout out. Hall also calls out Zbyszko and gets in a good line by saying he and Nash were watching old tapes of Larry, but even when they put them on fast forward he still wasn't moving. Scott says Larry can't even beat Bischoff and Larry says if Hall is scared just say so and he'll drop it.

Nash holds up the NWO tag belts and says he and Hall are champions because the Steiners never beat them. As for Giant, he can call himself the true giant of pro wrestling because Nash is just too sweet. Eric brings out the big surprise of the night: Hollywood Hogan, who brings out Rick Rude as the real surprise.

This is considered a big deal because Rude also appeared on Raw earlier in the night in a taped segment. This is considered to be a big deal for

Nitro, but I've never understood why. Yeah Raw is taped. WCW had made that clear over the years, so why is this such a shocking moment? They had stolen far bigger names in the past and had them appear mere days later, so why is Rude such a big deal? I've never gotten that.

Rude says what a difference twenty four hours make. He talks about the wrongs of professional wrestling: for one thing, Shawn is calling himself world champion when he never beat Bret Hart. It's wrong to have a referee ring the bell to rob Bret Hart of his title. On the other hand, it's right for Bret to abandon the Titanic and join the NWO. It's right for the NWO to beat up Sting, but it's wrong that Rude didn't get to participate in the beatdown. He'll partake in the next one though.

Hogan brags about being the man in pro wrestling. Apparently Spring has sprung and Sting has been stung. Hollywood talks about all of his brothers being in the NWO for life and that's that. I'm still waiting on the reasoning for Rude showing up here being such a huge deal.

Nitro Girls.

Ray Traylor says he'll fight any member of the NWO one on one. He goes on with how much he hates the NWO for awhile until he gets jumped and beaten down by said NWO. This goes on for awhile, Traylor gets the spray paint treatment and that's about it.

Glacier vs. Meng

Glacier jumps Meng to start as we hear Larry talking about some Secret Service agent telling him how much the White House loves Nitro. A kick to Meng's head just makes him mad so he chokes Glacier down in the corner. After some clubberin, Meng misses a headbutt and a charge into the corner, allowing Glacier to fire off some kicks. Apparently Glacier wants to vary up his offense away from the kicks. His solution to this is to throw more kicks. A Jimmy Hart distraction lets Meng hook the Tongan Death Grip for the quick win.

Barbarian and Ernest Miller come in for the big four man brawl with Miller cleaning house, only to be taken down by Meng's Death Grip as well.

DDP doesn't want Bret to join the NWO.

Alex Wright vs. Steve McMichael

The never ending Debra vs. Mongo feud continues as she's with Alex here. Goldberg vs. Mongo is announced for Sunday. Mongo immediately throws him to the floor but is distracted by the screeching Debra, allowing Alex to take over. We head back inside for some dance time and a spinning kick to Mongo's gut for two. They go outside again for Alex to chop away and go back inside, only for Wright to miss a cross body. Mongo pounds away but gets distracted by Debra, causing him to shove the referee for the lame DQ.

McMichael punches Wright into the crowd for good measure.

More Nitro Girls.

Rey Mysterio vs. Chris Jericho

The bell rings and Tony immediately talks about a big Nitro in Atlanta in 1998. Jericho works on the arm to start before hooking a headlock instead. Rey flips him over into the ropes but is placed on the apron instead. A quick springboard dropkick puts Jericho down but Chris comes back with a slam for no cover. Jericho chops away in the corner and busts out a top rope gorilla press slam which is a new one even on Tenay.

Mysterio falls to the floor after no cover but Jericho follows him out and grabs Rey by the mask to send him back inside. A suplex puts Rey down for two and a double underhook backbreaker has Mysterio in even more trouble. Jericho gets two more off a regular backbreaker and a powerbomb

out of the corner keeps Rey in trouble. He gets the knees up to block the Lionsault though and slides to the apron for a sunset flip and a VERY near fall. Jericho unleashes the double powerbomb but as he tries for a third, Mysterio slides off his back and hits a springboard spinning hurricanrana into the West Coast Pop for the pin.

Rating: B-. This took time to get going but the last minute or so was very hot. Mysterio can fly with the best of them and Jericho was thinking out there by working over the back. That makes for a good match and this was no exception. Mysterio would get a Cruiserweight title shot at the PPV on Sunday.

Benoit says Bret would never go NWO.

The announcers talk about about Nitro so far and here's Bischoff to the announce desk. He slaps Larry to draw him into the obvious NWO beatdown.

Hour #2 begins.

Villano IV vs. Diamond Dallas Page

A quick rollup gets two for Page and he clotheslines IV while also shrugging off some interference from V. It worked so well the first time that V tries it again, but this time the evilness (Villano does mean villain after all) works and down goes Page for some stomping and choking. V chokes away using the ropes and while he's being yelled at (in English), IV comes in off the top to give IV another near fall. Page comes back with a clothesline to send IV to the floor where he dives on both brothers to take over again. Back in and it's the Pancake and Cutter for the pin. Short and better than expected.

V takes a Cutter of his own.

Cruiserweight Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Dean Malenko

Dean is challenging and slaps away an offer of a handshake. Eddie clotheslines him down and hits a quick tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to take over. Malenko comes back with a shoulder block to send the champion to the floor but as they come back in, Eddie stomps Dean down to take over again. A dropkick to the chest and one to the back of the head keeps Dean in trouble and a suplex puts him down again.

Eddie pounds away in the corner and sends him into the buckle so he can choke away. Another suplex puts Dean down as Eddie isn't exactly lighting the world on fire with his offense here. Dean jumps to the apron as Rey is watching from the entrance. We take a break and come back with Eddie choking Dean on the ropes. Malenko hits a backdrop and stomps away in the corner. A leg lariat gets two for Dean but Eddie comes back with a dropkick to send Dean to the apron.

Back in and Dean almost botches his butterfly powerbomb and can't get the Cloverleaf. Eddie hooks the Gory Stretch but Dean counters into a sunset flip but Eddie counters into a rollup of his own for two. Eddie jumps into a wheelbarrow suplex but he reverses the Cloverleaf into a small package. Dean goes up top and gets superplexed down for no cover. Eddie goes up top now but Dean pulls him down with a release belly to back superplex. Both guys are down and they stay down for a ten count and a draw.

Rating: B-. This took awhile to get into but after Dean started his comeback it turned into Malenko vs. Guerrero as you know and love. Their awesome three way feud with Mysterio would continue up through Starrcade with the title changing around multiple times. Another good match here despite the slow start.

Lex Luger doesn't think Bret would join the NWO.

We see the Nitro Party winner from last week.

TV Title: Scotty Riggs vs. Perry Saturn

Saturn is defending and Larry is still banged up from the earlier attack. The champion immediately takes Riggs to the mat with a suplex but gets dropped by an elbow to the face. Perry bails to the floor for a breather (and a shot of a South Park sign, which is pretty surprising given that there were only seven episodes aired at this point) but Scotty goes after him.

This goes badly for the challenger as Saturn suplexes him out to the floor to take over. Back in and Saturn goes after the arm as Raven goes back into the crowd. A northern lights suplex gets two for Saturn but Scotty gets his feet up in the corner. Riggs lost his eye patch at some point.

A suplex and splash get two for Scotty as Heenan suggests Saturn poke Riggs in the good eye. Riggs loads up a superplex but instead punches Saturn down to the floor instead. There's a BIG dive off the top to take out the Flock other than Raven but Saturn crotches Riggs on the barricade to stop him again. Back in and Saturn hits a guillotine legdrop and the Rings of Saturn retain the title.

Rating: D+. Saturn looked solid but Riggs is just so boring. He has the most basic set of moves that I've seen for a mainstream wrestler in a very long time and he didn't give Saturn anything to work for here. The dive to take out the Flock was good but that's the only good spot I can ever remember in Riggs' entire career. Saturn tried but he needed something more than Riggs here.

The Steiners and DiBiase are attacked by the NWO while on the way to the ring. Even Hogan helps out here.

US Title: Curt Hennig vs. Lex Luger

Curt is defending and hides on the floor to start until Luger pulls him in by the hair. A backdrop puts Hennig down and Lex pounds away in the corner. Curt pokes him in the eye and hits the Hennig necksnap for two. A

hard chop in the corner wakes Luger up and he comes out with a clothesline to take over again. There's a vertical suplex for no cover but Luger kicks Curt in the ribs instead.

Hennig comes right back with a pair of running knee lifts as the crowd is very silent for this match. The champion hooks a sleeper which gets two arm drops, only for Lex to fight back with a belly to back suplex. He throws Curt over the top and out to the floor but as Luger goes after him, Curt throws him into the referee and blasts Luger with the belt. Back in and there's the HennigPlex but Nick Patrick calls for the bell.

Rating: C. Not bad here with these two having a decent chemistry together. The fans didn't react to a lot of the stuff though and I hope that's not because they were just expecting a run-in or a false finish. If so, that really doesn't bode well for the last few good months we have of Nitro before everything starts to fall apart.

Post match Giant makes the save for Luger.

Giant vs. Scott Hall

Nash comes over to the commentary desk, sending Tenay and Heenan running away. Giant misses a big right hand but connects with a hard shove to put Hall down into the corner. Hall puts on a headlock but gets lifted into the air and placed on the top rope, followed by a polite tap on the jaw. Scott gets in some right hands but gets tossed into the corner with ease. Some chops put Hall down and a slam does the same.

Scott goes to the floor and after escaping a chokeslam bid, Hall slams Giant's hand into the steps. Back inside and Hall stomps away on the hand even more but Giant rises up while no selling the hand. A few headbutts put Scott down and there's a right hand from Giant. The chokeslam is loaded up but here comes the NWO for the save and the DQ.

Rating: C-. I liked the psychology Hall was using here but how good can a six minute match between these two on Nitro be when a minute of it is spent with Hall stomping on Giant's hand? This was just to trigger the big brawl to end the show to set up the battle royal on Sunday. Not bad here but the time hurt it.

A bunch of midcarders come out for a big brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This was a wrestling heavy show and an ok go home show. They focused a lot on the non-battle royal matches as I'm guessing the theory is the main event sells itself on name only. Not bad here with some decent action, but the signs are all starting to appear that things are going to get bad in a hurry.

Here's World War 3 if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/04/01/world-war-3-1997-totally-not-a-royal-rumble-rip-off/>

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On This Day: April 8, 2011 – Smackdown 2011: Edge's Last Show As Champion

Smackdown

Date: April 8, 2011

Location: Times Union Center, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T, Josh Matthews

We're kind of in the new year here on Fridays as Edge is still World Champion. Tonight we'll probably start the build to Extreme Rules. Since we've kind of passed go here, it's rather hard to tell what else is going to go on. It should be interesting as things usually are on this show. Let's get to it.

The theme song opens us up. I guess the enemy this week is wrestling as this isn't a wrestling company anymore. The fact that Vince thinks this will get them more accepted by the mainstream is absolutely hysterical and head shaking at the same time.

Cue Alberto minus his car. Is there a reason why he doesn't have one as he apparently has like 50 of them? He says that destiny can be delayed as it was at Wrestlemania. He blames Edge and Christian for delaying his destiny and destroying his car. It's not about the money though, but those cars are like his children. He starts to talk about revenge but is cut off by Edge.

Edge comes out in a tow truck which is pulling the Rolls Royce. Nice bit there. He says that if this car is like his child, Del Rio needs to love it unconditionally. With a little tender loving care it can be fine again. Edge pulls out some spray paint and writes something that I think was just scribbles. Del Rio says he almost got him to tap out at Mania but Edge points out that he didn't do it. Alberto wants a rematch and Edge says no because there are people more deserving of title shots.

The driver of the tow truck honks the horn and it's Christian. Edge says

Christian has beaten Del Rio multiple times so obviously Christian is ahead of Del Rio in line. Here's Teddy who makes Del Rio vs. Christian for the shot at Extreme Rules. The match at the PPV will be a ladder match.

We'll get to see Cena and Rock again tonight. By that I mean the same thing from Raw. They say highlights though which helps a bit.

There's a rematch of the 8 man tag from Mania next that Josh says has a twist tonight that they'll explain when we come back. Now I'm no genius, but given that the graphic of the match says "2 out of 3 falls", I'm thinking it's in a cage. I could be wrong though.

Corre vs. Big Show/Kane/Kofi Kingston/Santino Marella

We get a clip from the PPV of Show knocking out Slater and that looked AWESOME. Kofi's tights are lime green tonight. It looked like there was a small edit during Kofi's entrance but I could be wrong. The video and song seemed to jump forward a bit. Gabriel vs. Santino to start us off. Slater comes in quickly and Corre takes over. Remember that this is 2/3 falls.

Santino reverses a right hand into a throw and it's off to Kane. Show beats on him for a bit also and we get the Andre/Snuka splash with Kofi on top of Slater for two. He sets for Trouble in Paradise but Gabriel and Barrett make the save as we go to a break. Back with Kane working over the Intercontinental Champion in the corner. Booker sounds out of breath for some reason.

Off to Jackson to face Kane. Jackson gets Kane into the corner and Corre alternates in and out very quickly to hammer away on him. Finally it's off to Gabriel who gets a missile dropkick on Kane for two. Kane finally remembers he's fighting a cruiserweight and launches Gabriel to the mat. Off to Kofi who cleans house and gets the first fall off a top rope cross body at 5:30 shown of 9:00. Kofi looks shocked that he actually got a pin.

We take another break and come back with Slater vs. Santino. Booker keeps going on and on about being ahead on points or something like that. Santino escapes a sleeper but is taken down by a forearm for two. Santino speeds things up and loads up the Cobra (I still can't believe a move that Jon Lovitz taught him caught on like it did) but gets his head kicked off by Barrett. Wasteland ties us up at 7:23 shown of 14:23.

Why doesn't Barrett just cover him again? There was no mention of a rest period or anything like that. Barrett hammers away and it's off to Slater again. Jackson comes in and this should be a slaughter. Clothesline in the corner gets two as Big Show DIVES to make the save. Off to Gabriel and we hit the chinlock. Show starts a weak Santino chant.

Gabriel misses a cannonball kind of move and it's off to Kane. Big side slam to Barrett gets two as does the top rope clothesline. Everything breaks down as Corre takes over. Kane sets for a chokeslam but all of Corre comes in to take him out for the DQ in the third fall at 11:10 shown of 18:10 (assuming 3:30 for commercials. I watch a preairing from Australia so it's hard to say for sure).

Rating: B-. Nice long match here to treat this like a match that deserved to be on Wrestlemania. I like that they allowed this to play out so that Corre doesn't look completely inept. Also, when's the last time you

remember getting a nearly 20 minute match on free TV after getting a 15 minute one on Raw? This worked rather well and was better than I expected.

The winners beat up Corre post match, including a triple (Santino helped) chokeslam to Jackson.

Sin Cara is still coming, even though he's already been on Raw.

Cody Rhodes vs. Trent Barreta

I love Cody's character right now. At the forums I post on someone made a great point: Cody's reaction to this is all the more psychological because everyone can see he looks exactly the same but in his mind he's hideous now. That's very interesting. Cody takes him down quickly and hammers away. Trent gets a springboard dropkick to get two though so maybe this won't be a total squash. Russian leg sweep gets two for Cody. This is the aggressive Rhodes as he sends Trent into the post shoulder first and Cross Rhodes ends this at 1:30. Ok so maybe it was a squash. Too short to rate.

Post match Cody beats on Trent some more until Rey makes the save.

We get the Rock vs. Cena confrontation from Raw again. Eats up almost 15 minutes. I get that it's a major moment, but you could easily trim it down by at least half. There's no real need to use 1/8 of your total show and about 1/5 of your TV time to just show a segment from the more watched show. I get that it's huge, but they do this every week. I'm curious about Corre if nothing else.

Edge says he hopes Christian wins because he'd love to have a ladder match with Christian. Christian implies he'd win in the ladder match and says Edge can cheer for Alberto if he likes. The camera stays on Christian after Edge leaves and he looks at the belt which Edge forgot. Edge comes back and Christian says keep an eye on that, referring to the belt. No sign of tension or anything here.

Laycool vs. Kelly Kelly/Beth Phoenix

Is Natalya injured or something? I haven't seen her in months. Apparently she's been on Superstars. Ok then. Josh asks Cole why he's not in his singlet tonight. Cole almost says he's not wrestling tonight but cuts himself off to say entertaining. The level of idiocy of this continues to astound me. So remember people: this is an entertainment feature, not a match. So in other words we have girls in small outfits performing choreographed moves while coming out to hip hop/R&B music while on a platform above the guests and gyrating around with other women. Sound familiar to anyone else?

Beth vs. Michelle to start us off with Beth destroying her. Michelle is knocked into Layla so Layla is yelled at. Backbreaker gets two for Beth. Layla is tagged in as Laycool argues. After a scary press slam, Kelly is brought in and does her Tarantula kind of move to Layla. X Factor gets two. Layla reaches for a tag and McCool falls to the floor like Layla did, allowing Kelly to roll Layla up for the pin at 2:50. Far more story advancement than match and that's fine.

Laycool argues in the aisle.

We get a clip from Raw of Cole spraying barbecue sauce on Lawler. In the arena Cole asks who shot JR. HE DID! Cole brings out Swagger who says training Cole was easy because Cole is smart and talented. Swagger declares Cole the new Mr. Wrestlemania. They take a victory lap but some music hits. It's Sin Cara who does his trampoline jump into the ring and takes Swagger down using a variety of speed moves including a corkscrew plancha to the floor.

We get the end of the Miz/Austin clip from Raw which was good.

Layla comes up to Michelle in the back and hands her a paper. They're going to have couples counseling. Michelle says they're not a couple. Layla says just show up.

Decent length video recapping the Hall of Fame inductions.

Christian vs. Alberto Del Rio

Lot of time for this one. We take a break before Christian's entrance which is a nice perk because it means there will be some more time before the first break in the match. Edge comes out to be on commentary. Edge isn't sure who he prefers to face as Christian is good with the ladders also. Edge has been in 19 ladder matches. That's insane.

Christian takes Del Rio down with a headlock to start us off. Both are sent to the floor at different times with Christian being the last one in the ring. Big dropkick sends Del Rio crashing onto the floor again. We take a break and come back with Christian being slammed into the steps. Del Rio takes over and chokes him on the ropes back in the ring.

Time to start on the arm now as is Del Rio's custom. Christian fires off a bit right hand and goes up which gets him nowhere. Well he went up but it didn't advance him in the match anywhere. Maybe I should just move on. Superplex puts both guys down and Christian plays possum to get a cradle for two. Edge is ripping into Cole here and it's rather funny stuff.

Back to the floor again with both guys via a Cactus Clothesline from Christian. Better than up their noses with a rubber hose I guess. Christian fights back and gets an elbow off the middle rope for two. Top rope cross body gets two. Ricky Steamboat he is not. Killswitch is reversed into an attempt at the armbreaker but that is broken up also. Del Rio sends him into the corner and grabs the armbreaker but Christian gets a rope. Christian sets for something but Brodus stops him. Edge spears Brodus but the distraction allows Del Rio to hit the enziguri off the top for the pin at 10:30 shown of 14:00.

Rating: C+. Surprisingly enough this wasn't very good. It's not bad but I couldn't get into this one at all. They were trying but at the same time nothing ever really got going. Del Rio winning is probably the best choice as Edge vs. Christian is a potentially big match that needs to be on a big stage. That being said I think we can pencil it in for Over the Limit. Not bad, but I wasn't huge on this one.

Overall Rating: B. Good show this week as it was very wrestling heavy and we had multiple storylines advanced at the same time. Things seem to be staying the same after Mania but that's ok I guess as it tends to be the custom after Mania. Good show here but then again that's par for the course here. They've gotten very good at the use of squashes to advance stories which is incredibly hard to do in today's product. Solid show overall here though.

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book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon at:

On This Day: April 7, 2011 – Superstars 2011: Back When Rock vs. Cena Was Fresh

Now that Wrestlemania is actually over, people might actually read these again.

Superstars

Date: April 7, 2011

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia, Time Warner Cable Arena, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Scott Stanford, Josh Matthews, Jack Korpela, Matt Striker

It's the first show after Wrestlemania so I think you know what the main topic is going to be from the commentators. Rock cost Cena the title, meaning Miz is still WWE Champion. Not that any of them is going to appear here or anything of course. As usual this is going to be a low of lower card guys having longer matches than they would otherwise. Let's get to it.

Drew McIntyre vs. JTG

JTG takes him into the corner to start so Drew SMACKS him in the jaw. They trade more right hands with JTG taking over for a bit. Drew drapes him ribs first over the top rope and things slow down a bit. Drew cranks things up with an armbar but JTG fights up and hits a big boot for no

cover. A crucifix gets two and there's a DDT for the same on McIntyre. Drew comes back with a big boot of his own and the Future Shock DDT gets the pin.

Rating: D+. JTG tried but at the end of the day, the guy just isn't that good. Drew continues to bore everyone in sight which has a lot to do with why his pushed stopped cold. Well that and his wife Tiffany beating him up but you get the idea. Nothing to see here as it was just a quick match to open the show with probably the biggest name we'll see here tonight in McIntyre.

Recap of the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. Shawn was the headliner.

Yoshi Tatsu vs. Tyson Kidd

Kidd is a heel here and takes Tatsu down with a test of strength grip before cranking on the left arm a bit. Yoshi gets back up and flips out of Tyson's grip before firing off some kicks to the torso and a few armdrags into an armbar. Back up and Tyson pounds away on Tatsu, only to be dropkicked out to the floor as we take a break. Back with Kidd holding a cravate but getting caught in a crucifix for two.

A hard kick to Tatsu's face gets two for Tyson and it's back to the cravate. Back up and Yoshi fires off a spinwheel kick but both guys are down. Yoshi hits some more hard kicks for two but as he goes up top for a big old kick, Kidd pops up and takes him down with a hurricanrana for two. Yoshi avoids a springboard dive and a high kick to Kidd's head gets the pin.

Rating: C. I wasn't a big fan of all the kicks from both guys but that's what you get from smaller guys in modern WWE. The match wasn't bad for Superstars but it would take awhile before Kidd hit his stride. Yoshi was a guy who used to show so much potential and then it just stopped dead.

We see Cena challenging Rock to a match at Wrestlemania 28, a year in advance. The match worked to put it mildly. For no apparent reason, the Corre ran out to interrupt the ending. This never went anywhere at all but we do get about three minutes of Rock and Cena beating up Slater.

Santino Marella vs. Ted DiBiase

They fight for control on the mat until Santino offers a handshake. DiBiase cranks on a hammerlock for a bit before punching Santino in the face and make it a brawl as we take a break. Back with DiBiase holding a chinlock followed by a dropkick. The following clothesline gets two and Marella's sunset flip is broken up with a right hand to the head. Back to el chinlock followed by some pounding away in the corner, only to have Santino avoid a charge. Things speed up but Santino's headbutt hits knees. Dream Street (DiBiase's finisher) is broken up and the Cobra gets the pin for Santino.

Rating: D. Erg DiBiase was boring here. He did nothing but basic punches and chinlock which isn't enough to hold my interest for a five minute match. The whole being the son of the Million Dollar Man didn't do him any favors either. This was just a quick match for the sake of saying there was a main event on this show.

Overall Rating: D+. I remember why I don't watch this show all that often. When it's good it can be very good for a fan who doesn't want most of the stories, but on the other hand there are times where this show is very boring, much like it was here. Nothing on here was any good and it's difficult to remember what the matches even were already. It would get better though.

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More Fandango Awesomeness

I can't embed this but my goodness it's amazing. From after Raw.

<https://vine.co/v/btWLDKPHT6a>

Monday Night Raw – April 8, 2013: I've Never Seen Anything Like This

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 8, 2013

Location: IZOD Center, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the night after Wrestlemania and we have a new world champion here on Raw. Cena pinned Rock after a somewhat lackluster match, giving Cena not only his 14th world title but his 4th title win at Mania alone. Other than that, HHH still has a job, Undertaker has still never lost at Wrestlemania, Shield is still undefeated and Del Rio retained the title. Tonight is usually a huge show with a big surprise, so let's get to it.

Here's Cena to open the show. We also get a Tweet from Rock saying that he tore his abdominal muscles off the bone during his match last night. Cena says it should be everyone's dream to win in the main event of

Wrestlemania, because you get the adulation, the respect and the cheers (of which he gets very few on all counts). He says the fans have known him for ten years now and it seems they're angry tonight. Actually Cena is upset too because Wrestlemania is over.

However, it's the night after Wrestlemania which is when things happen. Last year he got beaten up by Lesnar but he's still here now. Maybe he'll do a little dance. Maybe with a kick. Maybe with a little shake. "Maybe even a little heel turn?" Anyway he says he's the champion and this is what he wants for a Wrestlemania celebration: to defend the WWE Championship. He doesn't care who it is...and here's Mark Henry.

Henry gets in Cena's face and says that he won his match too, just like the champion. The fans chant for Sexual Chocolate so Cena cracks a joke. Henry yells some more about Ryback so Cena cracks more jokes. Cena agrees to defend the title tonight against Henry but here's Booker T. He says Rock is #1 contender to the WWE Championship (Cena: "Once in a lifetime best two out of three?") because Rock has a guaranteed rematch. Therefore, if Henry wants a shot, he has to beat Cena in a one on one match tonight. Henry promises to put Cena in the Hall of Pain.

Alberto faces Colter/Swagger in a handicap match tonight.

Daniel Bryan vs. Big E. Langston

We get a Tweet from Shield saying that they're going to do something historic. Langston shoves Bryan down to start and hits a hard running charge into the corner to keep control. A delayed backdrop puts Bryan down and Langston pounds away in the corner. Bryan comes back with a bunch of kicks to the chest and a hard one to the head, but an AJ distraction lets Zigler crotch Bryan. As Kane goes after Dolph, Big E. throws Daniel over the top and onto Kane for the save. Back inside and the Big Ending gets the pin on Bryan at 2:17. Total squash.

Kurt Warner, former NFL quarterback, hosts a new reality show called The Moment on USA and is at Raw tonight.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Wade Barrett

Barrett is challenging after losing the title last night on the pre-show. Wade pounds away in the corner to start but Miz comes back with a left hand and a snap suplex for two. Off to a chinlock by the champion as the fans chant for Barrett. Wade escapes but gets caught in a quick sunset flip for two more and it's back to the chinlock. That's easily broken up as we now talk about the rugby player Barrett is named after. Wade comes back and sends Miz into the ropes for a neckbreaker to the apron as we take a break.

Back with Barrett getting a near fall off the Winds of Change. Miz rolls to the floor so Wade can drop an elbow off the apron for two. Off to a chinlock on the champion for a bit but Miz fights up and pounds away. A running knee and big boot put Barrett down but they botch the Reality Check (the backbreaker went fine but Wade fell down before the neckbreaker started).

The corner clothesline hits a bit better and Miz's short DDT gets two. Wasteland is escaped and Miz puts on the Figure Four, only to have Wade make the rope. Barrett comes back with a quick elbow and goes to the middle rope (since nothing has been done to his leg at all so far right?). Miz breaks it up but gets slammed into the top turnbuckle. Barrett hits the Bull Hammer and regains the title at 13:00.

Rating: C+. The match wasn't bad actually but the booking makes less than no sense. This puts Barrett at 1-2 in the last three weeks against Miz, but he walks out with the title anyway. Naturally there's going to be a third match because that's how WWE works, but this whole feud (what are they fighting over anyway?) is worthless and done for.

Vickie and Maddox are arguing in the back when Sheamus comes in. He wants Big Show tonight but Brad says Sheamus will owe them one. Sheamus glares him down so Vickie says she'll give Sheamus a match. She doesn't say who it's going to be against though.

Randy Orton comes up to Booker in the back and asks for a match with Big Show tonight. Booker says Sheamus has already gotten that match tonight but Orton says Booker is a GM and a Hall of Famer. This makes Booker overrule Vickie and give Orton the match instead. Great. Now we get

battling GMs. Again.

Here are Colter and Swagger with Zeb asking for the fans' support for their handicap match up next against Del Rio. He wants the fans to chant USA when Del Rio comes out.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Zeb Colter/Jack Swagger

The heels have to tag so Swagger starts things off. The fans want Ziggler. Not much of note to start until Swagger is sent to the floor. Del Rio hits a suicide dive to send Swagger into the announce table and hits a running stomp for good measure. A top rope cross body gets two on Swagger but Zeb gets in a cheap shot, allowing Swagger to take out the world champion's knee.

The knee is worked on even more until Del Rio fights back and tries for the enziguri in the corner. It misses by six inches but thankfully Swagger doesn't sell it. They trade some standing switches and there's the Patriot Lock, but Del Rio rolls out quickly. Del Rio puts the armbreaker on over the top rope until a four count but is knocked into the barricade for good measure as we take a break.

Back with Jack hitting a belly to back suplex for two and cranking on the leg some more. Jack misses a charge into the corner and hits the post, allowing Alberto to make his comeback with some clotheslines and the tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The backbreaker re-injures the champion's knee though and both guys are down again.

A hard kick to Swagger's head gets two but the armbreaker is countered into a belly to belly for two. Off to the Patriot Lock again but Alberto makes a rope. The hold goes on for the third time but Alberto pulls him into the armbreaker as he did last night. Jack taps at 11:06. Colter never got into the match.

Rating: D+. This wasn't terrible but at the same time it's the same.....screw the rating because we've got music.

Post match Alberto has his leg looked at and HERE COMES ZIGGLER!

Smackdown World Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Dolph Ziggler

The place goes NUTS for Ziggler as he stomps away on the leg and head of Alberto. The Fameasser hits for two but Ziggler misses a splash in the corner. The enziguri in the corner hits for a VERY close two and there's the armbreaker. Ziggler cranks on the bad knee to break the hold and the Zig Zag gives us a new champion at 2:15.

If that's not enough, here's Undertaker. He talks about dedicating the match to Paul Bearer...and here's Shield. They surround the ring and all get on the apron at the same time. Cue Kane and Bryan for the save before there's any contact. As usual, Shield runs when the numbers are even.

In the back, Ziggler says he's going to go show off his new title.

R-Truth/Santino Marella/Zack Ryder vs. 3MB

No entrances for any of these guys in this random tag match. Truth and Heath start things off with Slater being slammed down. Santino comes in, thrusts his pelvis, gets punched once, and bails. Off to Ryder vs. Mahal with Zack getting beaten down on the floor by a cheating McIntyre. Apparently Drew is legal now and hits a big boot to the jaw for no cover.

Off to Slater for some more beating before it's back to McIntyre for an armbar. A neckbreaker puts Drew down and there's the hot tag to Santino. He cleans house on Slater with his usual stuff but Mahal breaks up a near fall. Everything breaks down and the Cobra is enough to pin Slater at 3:30.

Rating: D. I have no idea what the point of this was. Were they running short or something and needed to fill in five minutes with something like this? None of the guys have anything going on right now so let's spend a few minutes on them here to fill in a gap...I guess?

We look at the week in New York/New Jersey to promote Wrestlemania.

Orton and Sheamus argue in the back. Sheamus says he has this and Orton isn't pleased.

Last night Big Show said he didn't turn on his partners but rather they turned on him. He tagged himself in and yeah, he saved the team from the TripleBomb. Then later on, Orton stole the tag which should have belonged

to him because Orton had to take his thunder. No one is taking Show's thunder again. That's not the route he wants to take anymore. The only thing important to him anymore is himself.

Here's Sheamus to ask who wants to see him face Big Show. He calls out Vickie to make it official but here's Orton instead. Randy gets in Sheamus' face and says that Big Show is his tonight. He asks the fans who wants to see him beat up Big Show and the fans seem pretty split. The solution? TWITTER POLL!

Back from a break and Orton wins the poll 77-23. Before the match though, here are Booker and Vickie. Instead of Orton vs. Big Show, it's Orton vs. Sheamus and the winner gets Big Show. So the poll happened....why?

Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

They shove each other to start and the fans do an OLE chant. Orton hits a snapmare but Sheamus avoids a knee drop. Sheamus hits a pair of knees for his own for two and starts working on the arm. Orton comes back with another knee to the chest as the match keeps going. Randy hooks a chinlock as the fans think a four minutes old match is boring.

Now Sheamus hooks a chinlock as the announcers talk about going to London in a few weeks for Raw. Now the fans chant for Rob Van Dam. Now it's HBK. Orton slowly stomps away as the match is completely ignored. The fans are now chanting for JBL as Sheamus gets two off the rolling fireman's carry. Sheamus goes up top and the fans chant for Lawler. This is BIZARRE. Orton dropkicks Sheamus out of the air and now they're chanting Cole as we take a break.

Back with the fans chanting what sounded like DDP and then ECW as Sheamus makes a comeback. The Irish Curse hits for two as the crowd is doing the Wave. JBL: "I wish Michael would drown in it." Sheamus hits his knee to the ribs and the ten forearms in the ropes as the fans suddenly start cheering along. A suplex brings Orton back in as Sheamus is smiling. Orton's backbreaker puts Sheamus as we get a Randy Savage chant. Even the announcers are giving up at this point.

The powerslam and t-bone suplex put Sheamus down as the HBK chant starts

again. There's the Elevated DDT and Orton loads up the RK0, only to be shoved off into White Noise. I think the fans are booing Sheamus but how can you tell in this match? The Brogue Kick misses and here comes Big Show as I think everyone knew was about to happen. He throws Sheamus into the post, presumably ending the match at 15:10. Fans: "Thank you Big Show."

Rating: N/A. I have almost no idea what happened in this match but the crowd stole the show here. The thing I don't get is that while the match was slow paced, it wasn't THAT bad. This is a case where the fans just did not care what was going on and found ways to entertain themselves. I've never seen anything like this but it was awesome in a way. For an actual grade, we'll go roughly C- or so.

Post match Show KO's Orton and hits a BIG spear on the floor. The fans chant FIRE RANDY as Orton is launched into the announce table. Show picks up the announcers' chairs and tries to throw them into the ring but only hits the ropes both times. Fans: "ONE MORE TIME!" Show walks away instead.

We recap Shield invading Undertaker's speech earlier.

Fandango vs. Kofi Kingston

The fans are still hot and it seems to be for Fandango. Fandango dances around Kofi before Kingston sends him into the corner. The fans are HUMMING FANDANGO'S THEME MUSIC. Not that it matters as Jericho runs in for the DQ at 1:30.

Post match Jericho destroys Fandango by whipping into whatever he can find. They head inside and there are the Walls of Jericho for good measure. Referees finally come out to break it up. A Codebreaker leaves Fandango laying. The referee declares Fandango the winner and from his back in agony, Fandango corrects his pronunciation. The crowd basically starts a dance party to Fandango's music.

Video on Cena's media appearances today.

We look at HHH getting his arm looked at. He's fine apparently.

Here's Heyman (crowd ERUPTS) in the back with something to say. His guys lost last night but it took HHH 23 minutes to beat Lesnar. Shawn and HHH aren't here because of the beatings they took last night at Lesnar's hands. Paul says Lesnar is ready for a fight TONIGHT. That isn't happening though, because Brock doesn't fight for free. Instead, Heyman wants to talk about Punk who is going to tell the fans how he feels....next week.

Rhodes Scholars/Bellas vs. Funkadactyls/Tons of Funk

This was scheduled for last night but got bumped for time reasons. We're joined in progress after a break with Naomi hitting the Rear View on one of the Bellas. Off to Cody but Naomi hits a rana on him anyway. Tensai comes in and launches Cody into the corner before hitting a RUNNING FLIP DIVE into the corner. Cody hits a Disaster Kick to send Tensai into 619 position.

The Bellas smack their hips onto Tensai's head and the Wind-Up Elbow gets a BIG reaction. The hot tag brings in Brodus for his usual stuff and a kind of slide into a cover gets two. Everything breaks down and Sandow is crushed between the big men. A double splash ends Damien at 2:28.

We look at The Moment again.

John Cena vs. Mark Henry

Non-title here and if Henry wins, he gets a title shot at some point in the future. Cena ducks under Henry and dances a bit. He pounds on Henry but gets run over by a single shot from Mark. The fans are behind Henry of course. Mark pounds on Cena in the corner but misses a splash, allowing Cena to pound away. Henry rolls to the floor as we hear about Rock tearing his abdominal muscle off his pelvis bone in addition to having a hernia.

They go back to the announce table so here's a chant for the table. Henry loads up the announce table but Cena escapes the World's Strongest Slam. Mark rams him back first into the post but Cena sends him into the steps and slides back inside for the countout win at 3:29. Seriously that's it.

Rating: D+. Again what can you expect here? They didn't have the time to do much here but what we got wasn't bad. Cena is the kind of guy who could have a good match against Henry if given the time, but again what can you ask for with about two hundred seconds to a match? Nothing to see here.

Post match Henry lays out Cena but Ryback makes the save. Ryback lays out Henry with a Meat Hook....and turns to look at Cena. The fans chant YES but Ryback pulls Cena to his feet. Cena stares at him and Ryback nods. Cena poses on the ropes and Ryback does FEED ME MORE. Cena looks at Ryback....AND THERE'S THE MEAT HOOK! Shell Shock to Cena ends the show and we've got a heel turn.

Overall Rating: C+. I've seen over 40,000 matches and well over 2000 shows. I have NEVER seen anything like this crowd tonight. I'm pretty sure they started because they were bored and then they just took off. As for the show...eh it wasn't terrible, but the first hour SUCKED. I'm sick of these GM's having to hold our hands through every match being made and taking up so much time because saying "these two have issues, tonight they fight" is too complex. Anyway, a lot of stuff happened tonight and it's going to be interesting to see the fallout of it. Good show overall and FAR more interesting than I was expecting.

Results

Big E. Langston b. Daniel Bryan – Big Ending

Wade Barrett b. The Miz – Bull Hammer

Alberto Del Rio b. Jack Swagger/Zeb Colter – Cross Armbreaker to Swagger

Dolph Ziggler b. Alberto Del Rio – Zig Zag

Zack Ryder/Santino Marella/R-Truth b. 3MB – Cobra to Slater

Sheamus b. Randy Orton via DQ when Big Show interfered

Fandango b. Kofi Kingston via DQ when Chris Jericho interfered

John Cena b. Mark Henry via countout

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon at:

ZIGGLER CASHES IN MITB!!!

The place went nuts when his music hit. Del Rio has just finished a handicap match against Swagger and Colter. Ziggler..... WON THE TITLE with the Zig Zag. New Champion!

CENA TURNS HEEL ON RAW!

I kid you not. During his opening promo he did a dance, during which he said he was going to shake, so he shook his hips. Then he said he was going to kick a little bit, so he kicked his foot up. Then he slid his foot around the mat and said "maybe a little heel turn too?"

Yeah he's still a face but the joke was funny.

Rock Allegedly Walks Out On WWE

Word on the street is that Rock was scheduled to be at Raw tonight and talk about losing the title, only to be laid out by Lesnar, setting up a showdown at Mania XXX. Well allegedly, and I emphasize that word, Rock said screw that and went home. Again, no word on if this is official, but we'll know in like six hours. Until then, better go pay to read EXCLUSIVE BACKSTAGE INFO which will NEVER be published for free on another site, right? Did I mention I find that method of news reporting stupid?

Anyway, assuming this is true:

1. It's Cena's fault right? Everything else is. We better turn him heel and then complain about how lousy his heel turn was executed.
2. If Rock wants to leave, I have no issues with it, much like I have few with Austin bailing in 2002. He doesn't owe WWE or the fans a thing.
3. It's not like he lit the world on fire last night so why not let him go? It doesn't really add much anymore.

Thoughts on this?

Thank You All Again

Yesterday took the page views record and beat it within an inch of its life, shattering the old mark by FORTY PERCENT. I was blown away by this as I expected a big day, I didn't expect this. Thank you so much and I'm still stunned by how well things went yesterday.

Wrestlemania XXIX: And So...It Ends?

Wrestlemania XXIX

Date: April 7, 2013

Location: MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Attendance: 80,676

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

We have arrived at the biggest night of the year. The main events is John Cena vs. The Rock II for the WWE Championship. If that isn't enough for you to get into this, we also have Brock vs. HHH II, Undertaker vs. Punk and Del Rio vs. Swagger for the Smackdown Title. The show looks great, the matches look good, the WWE is going home, and it's Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Wade Barrett

Miz is challenging. This match was set up because both guys had movies out at the same time but that has since been dropped. Miz beat Barrett on Raw a few weeks ago as well. Miz escapes a belly to back suplex to start and gets two off a quick sunset flip. Barrett gets in a kick in the corner to take over but Miz blocks the kick in the ropes. The Reality Check gets two for Miz before the Wasteland and Skull Crushing Finale are

both countered.

Winds of Change get two for Barrett but the Bull Hammer misses. Miz takes the legs out and puts on the Figure Four but Barrett gets a rope. Wasteland hits this time for two and Wade is frustrated. In a unique counter, Miz trips up Barrett and puts on the Figure Four from the mat for the submission and the title at 4:10.

Rating: D+. What do you want here? It's a four minute match and not a very good one at that. At the end of the day, Miz isn't anything special, the match was nothing special, Barrett hasn't meant anything of note in forever, the title means nothing, and the match was four minutes long. How in the world are they supposed to get anything of note going? The answer is they aren't, because that's what a pre-show match is for.

The opening video is about Hurricane Sandy and is narrated by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who talks about New Jersey rising up due to its great spirit.

The National Guard waves a bunch of American flags.

The real opening video talks about growing up and making an impact on the grandest stage of them all. It's your standard video about making a Wrestlemania moment, but well done.

Much like previous years, there's a big canopy setup, but this year there's a Statue of Liberty over the ring.

Shield vs. Sheamus/Big Show/Randy Orton

Surprising choice for an opener. Thankfully Shield doesn't come down from the upper deck of the arena. Sheamus and Reigns get us going and the pale one pounds away from one corner to the other. This is already longer than Sheamus' match from last year. A forearm puts Reigns down as does a hard clothesline for two. Off to Orton for the knee drop and some stomping. We get Cole's first error of the night as he says Orton won the WWE Championship at Wrestlemania 24 (he retained).

Reigns gets in some shots to the head and it's off to Rollins. That goes badly as well for Shield as he gets pounded in the corner and suplexed down. Back to Sheamus but Seth gets in a dropkick to the knee to take him down. Ambrose gets the tag and it's time for some evil double teaming. Sheamus will have none of that though and powerslam Ambrose down for two. Orton is ready for a tag but Show tags himself in instead. He rips Ambrose's vest open for the LOUD chop and Dean wants another one. Instead he gets about five in a row and a splash in the corner.

Dean actually comes back and dropkicks the knee out to bring in Rollins. A top rope kick gets two on Show and it's off to Reigns for some hard shots to Show's back. Ambrose is back in now, sans all of his vest and shirt. Back to Rollins as Shield is tagging in and out very fast. A running kick to the face gets two for Rollins and it's back to Roman for the chinlock. Big Show fights up with a belly to back suplex but Rollins takes out Orton to break up the tag. That's fine with Show though as he brings in Sheamus instead for some fast and hard hitting knees to the chest.

Rollins gets his own vest split open and there are the ten forearms to the chest. Ambrose tags himself in from the apron and there are ten forearms for him as well. The Regal Roll puts Dean down and Sheamus hits one on Rollins as well, this one on top of Ambrose. Reigns breaks up something from Sheamus off the top and everything breaks down. Rollins dives through the ropes at Orton and slams his own head into the barricade. Sheamus is triple teamed in the ring but as Shield loads up the TripleBomb, Show spears them all down for the save.

Ambrose is the only one still in the ring for Shield as Sheamus is crawling to the corner. He reaches for Big Show but Orton tags himself in instead. The powerslam sets up the Elevated DDT and Big Show is ticked off. Orton loads up the RK0 on Ambrose but Rollins springboards into the RK0 instead. Reigns spears Orton down as Big Show watches from the apron for the pin at 10:34.

Rating: B-. Not as good as I was hoping for here but it was still a good match and a fine opener. This was more about the trio instead of the Shield, which is ok I guess but I'm hoping Shield gets to have their

moment later on. The good thing here though is that Reigns got a 100% clean pin on Orton. It wasn't Shield picking the bones. It was a spear and a pin. That's a big help for the team and a good sign for them.

Big Show knocks out both of his partners post match.

Video on Rock vs. Cena.

Snooki is here.

Ryback vs. Mark Henry

They stare each other down before colliding. No one goes anywhere so they do it again to the same result. They slug it out with Ryback taking over. Some clotheslines stagger Henry a bit but Henry runs Ryback over with a single clothesline of his own. A powerslam gets one for Mark but Ryback fights back with some right hands. A suplex is blocked by Henry and he puts Ryback on the apron with ease. Henry sends him into the post and clotheslines him out to the floor for good measure.

Back in and Henry pounds away on the back even more to take away the power game from Ryback. We hit an old school bearhug for a bit before Henry throws him to the floor again. Ryback gets back in at nine and it's back to the bearhug. The bald one finally fights out of it and hits some shoulders to the ribs in the corner and there's the Meat Hook. Ryback loads up the Shell Shock but Henry grabs the top rope and falls onto Ryback's back for the pin at 8:06.

Rating: D. What in the world was that? Henry DESTROYED Ryback here and beat him almost clean in eight minutes. I don't think there was an injury or anything, but why in the world would you have Ryback lose here? This keeps his long losing streak going for what, eight months now? I don't get this one at all.

Post match Ryback hits the spinebuster and Shell Shock on Henry. So why did we have the match end that way???

The announcers play with toys and announce a partnership with the Special Olympics.

Some Special Olympians are here with Stephanie McMahon and Governor Christie.

Tag Titles: Big E. Langston/Dolph Ziggler vs. HELL NO

HELL NO is defending. This was set up by Ziggler beating Kane and Bryan in singles matches and wanting a title match as a result. This is also Langston's debut. We get a funny bit to start with Ziggler kissing AJ to taunt Bryan and getting kicked in the head for a VERY close two ala last year. Ziggler bails to the floor and gets caught with a suicide dive. Back in and Bryan fires off the hard kicks to the chest but the big one to the head misses.

Ziggler dives off to tag in Langston and he gets Kane. Big E. easily catches a charging Kane and hits three straight backbreakers to take over. Kane gets a boot up in the corner to stop a charging Langston but the chokeslam is easily broken up. Langston runs over Kane and it's back to Ziggler for some quick choking. Langston comes in again for more shots to Kane's chest and ribs. He lowers his head though and there's a DDT from Kane to put Langston down.

Back to Dolph who breaks up a tag to Bryan, only to miss a splash in the corner. Kane's side slam gets two but the top rope clothesline misses. The Fameasser kind of misses but Bryan comes in for the save anyway. Ziggler jumps into an uppercut from Kane but Langston splashes Kane for the save at two. The Big Ending is broken up and Kane sends Big E. to the floor for the knee from Bryan. The Zig Zag gets two on Kane and Dolph is frustrated. AJ slides in the briefcase but Kane ducks Ziggler's swing. The chokeslam connects and Kane takes out Langston. The Swan Dive from Bryan retains the titles at 6:30.

Rating: C. My predictions are taking a pounding tonight. I would assume this means Ziggler cashes in tonight, because we should totally buy him as world champion after he loses to Bryan here right? The match was fine, but at this point there's no need to see HELL NO with the belts anymore. It's just dull at this point and they stopped being funny a long time ago.

John Cena talks about Make-A-Wish.

Fandango vs. Chris Jericho

Fandango has a troop of dancing girls this time. This is set up because Jericho can't pronounce Fandango's name properly. This is also Fandango's debut. Fandango dances to start and is taken down by Jericho very quickly. The dancer heads to the floor but as soon as he heads back in, Jericho takes him down and pounds away even more. Fandango jumps over Jericho in the corner but walks into a Codebreaker to send him to the floor. A baseball slide sends Fandango to the floor and Jericho hits a big plancha to take him down.

Back in and Jericho wipes the dust off his hands but as he loads up the springboard dropkick, Fandango blasts him in the face with a hard kick. Off to a chinlock as JBL goes off on Fandango for posing too much. Chris fights up pretty quickly and speeds things up before hitting a top rope ax handle. A Thesz Press puts Fandango down as does an enziguri for two. A top rope cross body gets two for Jericho but he gets sent shoulder first into the post to stop his momentum again.

A Downward Spiral puts Jericho down and the guillotine legdrop hits...for two. The Walls are countered and Fandango clotheslines Jericho down. Another guillotine legdrop is broken up but so is Jericho's superplex bid. The third legdrop attempt misses but the Lionsault misses as well. Jericho tries the Walls but looks to have tweaked his knee. Fandango gets a sloppy small package for the pin at 9:16.

Rating: D. This was REALLY sloppy at the end and it appeared to be botched. Fandango did nothing to impress me here as he only seems to have one big move in the legdrop and that was tried three times in less than ten minutes. That ending looked awkward though so I'm guessing something went wrong.

We look at Miz winning the Intercontinental Title on the pre-show.

Video on Rock being back and various cities his fans come from.

We get a highlight package of Mania moments set to Rocky music on the big screens with all the other lights off. The lights come back up to reveal....Diddy, for the annual music medley.

We recap Swagger vs. Del Rio. Swagger and his manager Zeb Colter don't like people coming into their country and taking jobs from "people that look like them". The world champion, Alberto Del Rio, is one of these people. Swagger won the Elimination Chamber match and earned this shot. To make it personal, Swagger broke Alberto's friend Ricardo Rodriguez's ankle. The idea is that Del Rio is the kind of immigrant that America was built on, but the fans aren't really buying him in this role for the most part.

Smackdown World Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Jack Swagger

Swagger's entrance is cut off as he and Colter are in the ring after the video package. Colter goes on his usual rant about how awful New York is because of all the non-English languages being spoken. Apparently those foreigners are plotting something. Swagger pounds away to start but Del Rio sends him to the floor for a baseball slide. Alberto pounds on Jack on the floor for a bit before heading inside again. Colter starts distracting the champion immediately and Jack takes over.

A hard clothesline gets two for Swagger and it's off to an armbar, which Del Rio rolls up for two. Swagger comes back with the Vader Bomb for two but as he tries to wrap the champion's legs around the post, Alberto pulls Jack's shoulder into the post. Back in and Swagger charges into a boot to the face and there are some clotheslines from the champion. Both Swagger and Colter get kicked in the face with the actual wrestler getting covered for two as a result.

The armbreaker is countered and Swagger hits a high belly to belly suplex for two. Jack goes after the leg but the Patriot Lock is quickly broken up. The Vader Bomb is broken up as well and Del Rio hits the ten forearms to the back followed by the Backstabber for two. The champion hits a hard German suplex for two but the armbreaker is countered into the gutwrench powerbomb for two.

There's another Patriot Lock but as Swagger tries the grapevine, Del Rio slides over into the armbreaker in a sweet counter. Jack powers out of that into the Patriot Lock again but Alberto makes the rope. Another gutwrench powerbomb is countered and Del Rio fires off a kick to the

head, only to hurt his ankle even more.

The corner enziguri hits Swagger but Colter puts the foot on the ropes at two. Ricardo goes after Zeb but gets kicked in the ankle. Del Rio and Colter both have a crutch but the distraction lets Swagger deck Alberto. They head back in and there's the cross armbreaker out of nowhere for the tap out at 10:37. It was as sudden as it sounds.

Rating: C+. That ending came out of nowhere and cut short what was looking to be a good match. Thankfully they kept this a mat based match which is where both of these guys shine. The counters were pretty sweet out there and both guys looked good, but at the end of the day that ending stopped this dead in its tracks, which is a shame.

The National Guard is here.

We recap Punk vs. Undertaker, which is built around the idea of Punk disrespecting the memory of the recently dead Paul Bearer. Punk wants to be the 1 in 20-1, meaning he wants to break the Streak. He stole the urn as well, because that hasn't been done in about ten years or so.

Undertaker vs. CM Punk

Living Colour plays Punk to the ring live. Heyman and Punk throw the urn around before the match. Punk slaps Taker in the corner to try to tick him off before pounding away back inside. Undertaker launches Punk into the corner but Punk slaps him again. The chokeslam is blocked by a high kick but Taker kicks him in the face to counter. We head to the floor and Taker keeps pounding away before loading up the announce table.

Punk is rammed spine first into the post and there's the apron legdrop for good measure. Back inside and Taker gets some more open shots in the corner. Old School is broken up and Punk stomps away in the corner. In a solidly evil move, Punk hits Old School of his own followed by a Russian legsweep for two. Off to a kind of keylock by Punk which is easily broken up. Taker slugs him down but misses a running big boot into the corner.

A baseball slide puts Taker on the floor and there's a Macho ax handle to keep the Dead Man down. Back in and Punk works on the shoulder with some

Scott Hall driving shoulder blocks. Taker fires off some right hands but gets caught in a swinging neckbreaker for two. Heyman shouts that Punk is getting closer and it's off to a chinlock. A suplex eventually gets Taker out of trouble but Punk tries Old School again. That's just asking for trouble though and Punk crotches himself on the top rope. Heyman: "WHAT HAPPENED?"

Taker loads up the Dive but Heyman makes the save. Instead of a chokeslam to Heyman though, it's a springboard clothesline by Punk for two. The running knee in the corner connects and there's the Macho Elbow for two more. Punk draws power from the urn and calls for Go to Sleep but Taker counters into the chokeslam for two. Back up and Undertaker wins a quick slugfest before pounding Punk down into the corner. Snake Eyes connects but Punk leg lariats him down for two.

A clothesline sends Taker to the floor and now Punk finishes loading up the announce table. Taker tries a Last Ride through the table but Punk escapes and high kicks Taker onto the table instead. The Macho Elbow....doesn't put Undertaker through the table as Punk just kind of stops moving once he hits Undertaker. Both guys are down and Punk is holding his knee back in the ring. The referee gets to nine but Taker dives back in just in time.

Back in and Taker tries Hell's Gate but can't get it all the way in. Punk tries to flip over but only gets two as a result. There's the Anaconda Vice (no mention of Punk beating Taker in a submission match back in 2009) and Taker sits up. He glares at Punk while still in the hold and slips his hand underneath, but the chokeslam is countered into a bad GTS. Taker doesn't even go off his feet and picks Punk up for the Tombstone for two.

They slug it out again and Taker loads up the chokeslam, only to have Punk shove the referee down. Punk's knee is giving out but he hits the running knee in the corner only to be countered into the Last Ride. Heyman throws in the urn to blast Taker in the head ala HHH and the sledgehammer in 2001. Naturally it only gets two because Undertaker doesn't lose at Wrestlemania. Taker escapes the GTS twice and the second Tombstone makes it 21-0 at 22:23.

Rating: B. It was good but I never once bought the Streak as being in jeopardy. It wasn't going to end in a countout, it wasn't going to end off a GTS, it wasn't going to end with the same spot that HHH did better 12 years ago. It's a good match but it's a step down from the last four years. To be fair though, did anyone really think it was ending here? I'm not sure why you would. It's Undertaker at Wrestlemania for crying out loud. The match was entertaining though and Punk's visuals were great throughout, as was him hitting Old School. Good but definitely not great match here.

Undertaker reclaims the urn and looks like he's about to cry.

WWE has donated a lot of Slim Jims to the military.

Video on Cena being focused for the main event.

We recap HHH vs. Brock Lesnar using the same video we've seen about five times now. HHH didn't have a reason to get back into the ring until Lesnar hurt Vince. It's No Holds Barred with HHH's career on the line.

Brock Lesnar vs. HHH

Shawn Michaels is in HHH's corner. Lesnar is in the MMA gear which makes him look even scarier than usual. They slug it out to start with HHH firing off a bunch of right hands to the ribs. Lesnar knees the Game in the ribs and out to the floor we go. Brock is sent into the barricade and the announce table but Brock sends him into the apron to take over. They head into the crowd but HHH immediately clotheslines Lesnar back to ringside.

Brock blasts him in the head and picks up a chair as we head back inside. The jumping knee to the face puts Brock back down and Heyman steals the chair away before HHH can use it. They head back to the floor and Lesnar hits a belly to belly suplex to send HHH onto the floor. A release vertical suplex puts HHH through the table and Brock screams at HHH's body. There's another belly to belly suplex onto the remnants of the table and Brock gives us another evil grin.

Shawn tries to check on Brock and is sent running away. Back inside and

Brock pounds away into the corner and shrugs off a facebuster before clotheslining HHH down for two. Another belly to belly gets another two as Shawn plays cheerleader. A pair of German suplexes get three two counts and Brock shouts a lot. HHH fires back some right hands but gets whipped over the corner and back out to the floor.

HHH's arm is hanging there at the moment but he comes back with a clothesline and a right hand. Another clothesline puts Lesnar into the timekeeper's area. A chair shot staggers Brock but we head back inside for a bridging German for two. Brock decks Shawn off the apron but walks into a spinebuster. The Pedigree is countered but so is the F5. Shawn comes in to try a superkick but gets caught in the F5 instead.

A bad looking Pedigree gets two on Brock and it's sledgehammer time. Brock puts HHH up in mid swing and hits the F5 for two. We head to the floor and Brock cracks a chair over the Game's back before sending him into the steps. The same steps go upside HHH's head and Brock sends the other set into the ring. Back inside and Brock hits him in the arm with the steps for two more. Another shot with the steps gets another two but HHH comes back with some right hands. The Pedigree is countered into the Kimura arm lock but the ropes do nothing here.

Triple H breaks the hold twice by ramming Brock into the corner but Lesnar puts it on again. Brock fires off some knees and puts the hold on while on the middle rope but HHH picks him up and slams him down in a spinebuster. Brock misses a charge into the post and there's a low blow for good measure. HHH wraps Brock's arm around the post and Brock sounds like he is in labor. A chair shot crushes the arm against the post and HHH does the same against the steps for good measure.

HHH throws on a Kimura of his own and Brock screams for Heyman, only to have Shawn superkick Heyman down. Brock holds off from tapping and lifts HHH into the air before slamming him down onto the steps. HHH throws the hold right back on and Brock slams him down onto the steps again to break the hold a second time. Here's a third Kimura by HHH and Brock lifts him up, only to be DDTed onto the steps. It's sledgehammer time again and a shot to Brock's head sets up a Pedigree onto the steps for the pin at 24:00.

Rating: B+. This started slow but the ending was much better. I was actually thinking Brock would tap at the end and they had me not sure of who was going to win until the end. I'll have a lot more to say about HHH spending eleven months with Brock Lesnar and then beating him in the blowoff match at Wrestlemania, but for now this was a good, hard hitting, entertaining match.

We get the Hall of Fame video from last night.

The Class of 2013 is presented to the arena: Mick Foley, Booker T, Trish Stratus, Bob Backlund, Donald Trump (booed) and Bruno Sammartino (gets a trumpet entrance). Foley got the loudest ovation it seemed.

The attendance record is 80,676.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. The Rock

No entrance video, no musical performance, no special Mania entrance, nothing. Cena just walks out and kind of struts down the ramp at first. Apparently the eight person tag was cut from the show. I didn't think they could fit all of that into the amount of time they had left. We get Big Match Intros and we're ready to go. The crowd is exactly as you would expect it to be. Rock is champion and the huge crowd favorite if that wasn't clear.

A quick shoulder block gets no one anywhere so we stare each other down a bit more. Rock grabs a headlock which does nothing of note either. We try it again until they run the ropes a few times followed by a hip toss to send Cena to the floor. Back in and Cena sends Rock into the corner before pounding away a bit. The champion comes back with a clothesline and a kick to the face to put Cena down on the mat.

Rock drives some elbows into Cena's chest but gets clotheslined down again. The crowd isn't into this for the most part. Cena hooks a chinlock which transitions into a headlock on the mat. Rock fights up and hooks a sleeper as the fans think this is boring. A suplex puts Rock down and Cena stomps away as he continues to be the heel in the match. Rock fights back with a Samoan drop and they lay around a bit more. Cena's release fisherman's suplex gets two.

Rock tries the spit punches but Cena hits the shoulder. A second one misses and the spit punch connects. The spinebuster is countered into an STF attempt but Rock escapes. Cena hits his finishing sequence but the ProtoBomb is countered into the Sharpshooter, and it's WAY better than the one he used last year. Cena rolls out of that and kicks Rock off so he can hit the ProtoBomb.

The Shuffle misses (I don't remember that happening before actually, which is hard to believe) and Rock hits a DDT to take Cena down. The Rock Bottom is countered into a bad Crossface but when that gets Cena nowhere, he hits a third ProtoBomb and the Shuffle for no cover. The AA is countered but there's the spinebuster by Rock. Cena picks the leg to counter the Elbow though and the STF goes on. In an impressive power display, Rock rolls onto his back and breaks Cena's grip to escape.

Cena charges into the Rock Bottom for two as the fans are barely reacting to these near falls because we're not even fifteen minutes into this yet. The AA hits for two but the to rope Fameasser misses. Now the People's Elbow hits but of course it only gets two. The near falls aren't even close as Cena is kicking out at like two and a quarter instead of two and nine tenths.

After Cena rolls to the floor for a bit they head back inside for the boo/yay slugout. Rock for some reason tries a cross body and it's ANGRY Cena but he gets countered into a big Rock Bottom. AGAIN Cena kicks out barely after two which takes away a lot of the drama. Rock stops to listen to the people and loads up another Elbow, only to throw in You Can't See Me. In a nice callback to last year, Cena pops up and hits the AA for two.

Back up and they slug it out again and Cena hits a Rock Bottom of his own for two. NOW the fans are getting into this. Cena has no idea what to do now but as he loads up the Shuffle, he stops and sets up the Elbow. This is what cost him last year but he holds the ropes when Rock nips up, only to have the AA countered into a Rock Bottom for another two. This is starting to pick up a lot.

The AA is countered, the Rock Bottom is countered, the AA is countered

again, the Rock Bottom is countered again, the AA is countered again, Rock hits a DDT. The champion tries about the nineteenth Rock Bottom of the match but gets countered into the Attitude Adjustment to give Cena his 14th world title at 24:00. Yeah seriously, that's it.

Rating: C+. This started off REAL slow but picked up after about twenty minutes. The problem is it stopped as soon as they started to get going. This fell into the classic trap of trying to have an epic match and collapsing under the weight. The problem at the end of the day is we've seen this done better before, so what's the appeal here? Not much to see here and it was freaking boring at times.

They say something we can hear to each other and shake hands....and Rock walks out to his own music to end the show. Oh wait they salute each other and pose to really end it.

Overall Rating: B-. This falls into that awkward "Good but not memorable" category. The big matches were all good but nothing on here was what I would call a masterpiece. Rock vs. Cena was good but we saw a better and bigger match last year between the two. The crowd didn't help things, which ranges from either the cold or reports of REALLY obstructed views for a lot of them.

The biggest problem here is there was never that moment that you remember from each show until the end. Yeah that helps a lot, but it doesn't help when we've seen Cena win the title what, twelve times before? It also doesn't help that the moment comes after FIVE HOURS of WWE tonight.

Results

Shield b. Big Show/Randy Orton/Sheamus – Spear to Orton

Mark Henry b. Ryback – Henry fell on Ryback's back

HELL NO b. Dolph Ziggler/Big E. Langston – Swan Dive to Ziggler

Fandango b. Chris Jericho – Small Package

Alberto Del Rio b. Jack Swagger – Cross Armbreaker

Undertaker b. CM Punk – Tombstone

HHH b. Brock Lesnar – Pedigree on the steps

John Cena b. The Rock – Attitude Adjustment

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