

# Royal Rumble 2014 Preview

After Smackdown last night I'm actually excited for the show.

As always we'll start with the pre-show match. I can't imagine they'll take the belts off the Rhodes Brothers and give them to the Outlaws, especially not on a pre-show. The Brothers have been on fire as of late and come off like main event players, so the belts stay with them. The Outlaws have been impressive though as they're basically at the same level they were on fifteen years ago.

Lesnar over Big Show. There's a chance they'll do a double DQ, but Big Show doesn't get hurt by losing as he'll get at least two world title shots on PPV this year.

Orton keeps the title in a match I think people forget exists. The booking of this feud has been completely backwards with the title match being booked and then making it personal and the gimmick match leading off the feud. I don't believe for a second that there won't be interference of some sort and Orton keeps the title. I have very little desire to see this match.

I have a feeling we get a no contest/unclean ending to Bray vs. Bryan. The Wyatts losing kills most of the mystique but Bryan is so hot right now that you can't have him lose at a big PPV. I think they drag this out to another show which isn't the worst thing in the world.

Now for the real main event with the Rumble itself. Until #30 enters and it's not Bryan, I'll take Daniel Bryan as the favorite to win. He's the hottest thing in years and there are only twenty entrants accounted for so far. Yeah there are a lot of rumors out there about what might be coming for him at Wrestlemania but I'll believe the card when it's announced on Raw. If Bryan isn't in there, this is going to Batista, which it likely is anyway. Punk will make a good run but Kane

will screw him over, setting up Punk vs. Kane at Elimination Chamber which sets up Punk vs. HHH at Wrestlemania.

If AJ vs. Naomi is added, the champion keeps the title.

Overall the show definitely has me interested because the Rumble is a match that can go several ways. Yeah Batista is the big favorite at this point, but there are other options to winning it. The other matches should be fun though I have less of a desire to see them. The good thing about the Rumble is that a third of the show is spent on one match, so the entire show hinges on that alone.

Thoughts/predictions?

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## **Wrestler of the Day – January 21: Arnold Skaaland/Go Shiozaki**

No one really jumped off the page at me today so I'll do a double shot of two not bad guys. Today it's Go Shiozaki and Arnold Skaaland. We'll start with the old guy: Arnold Skaaland.

Skaaland is one of those guys that you hear about on occasion but almost no one remembers. He was a big deal back in the earlier days of the company, dating back to the 1950s. Skaaland also owned a piece of the

Capitol Wrestling Corporation, which is probably part of the reason why he was pushed for so long. Here's a tag match from January 6, 1966, which is one of the oldest things I've ever reviewed.

### Antonio Pugliese/Arnold Skaaland vs. Angelo Savoldi/Tony Altimore

This is 2/3 falls. Antonio is billed as Bruno Sammartino's cousin, which is an old tactic to give people a head start to getting over. Before the match, the announcer praises Vince McMahon (senior) for making up next week's card already. We also hear the term dark match on television, as we hear of Bruno appearing in a tag match at the end of the taping next week. Skaaland's team is the crowd favorite here.

Altimore and Skaaland get things going here with Tony trying to lure him into the heel corner. This goes nowhere until Arnold slaps him in the face and hooks an armbar. Savoldi tries to come in so the faces change without tagging. The referee throws Savoldi out so the good guys cheat again, resulting in Arnold hooking another armbar. Altimore counters into a front facelock/choke which he keeps getting admonished for.

Antonio comes in and hooks a cravate on Altimore. He lays Altimore on the mat and pulls on Tony's arms with his feet on Tony's shoulders in a submission hold which gets a bunch of two counts. Antonio literally rides around on Altimore as he crawls on all fours. Tony finally gets up and yells a lot, nearly punching out the referee. Antonio takes Altimore down again and hits a flying headscissors to bring Savoldi in as well.

Antonio snap mares Tony down as Savoldi tries to cheat some more, only to get hit in the chest. I don't think Savoldi has been in yet at all. Naturally as I say that he gets tagged in, only to run away, landing in the wrong corner. Skaaland, ever the nice guy, holds Angelo in the corner so Antonio can hammer away. The heels double team Antonio in the corner as I guess we're waiting on a hot tag to Arnold.

Scratch that as well as Antonio clotheslines Angelo down and brings in

Skaaland for a full nelson. Altimore's cheating fails as he hits Savoldi in the exposed chest. Savoldi backdrops Skaaland and I think we get a botch, as Angelo looks surprised that it worked. Immediately thereafter, they do the same spot with Skaaland hooking a sunset flip for the pin and the first fall.

It's Skaaland vs. Altimore to start the second fall with Arnold hitting a quick monkey flip. The thud on the mat sounded like thunder going off. Tony starts choking and is immediately caught, but it's enough to let Savoldi get in some choking. Skaaland avoids a shot in the corner and the heels nearly have a fight over it. The legal guys circle each other for a bit before Altimore grabs Arnold's arm for some cranking.

Savoldi tries to come in but Antonio literally chases him away. Everything breaks down for a bit until we get back to normal with Altimore punching Skaaland down. Unfortunately he punches him into Antonio who picks Tony up and lays him on the top rope. Antonio pounds Altimore over and over again in the face before dropping some knees to the head for the jackknife pin.

**Rating:** C+. For a match that ran over twenty minutes, I had no problem with this at all. It wasn't exactly the Midnights vs. the RNRE, but this certainly wasn't boring. A lot of the moves are ones you would see today and it was clear who the good guys and bad guys were. The ending with Altimore getting beaten down and pinned was fine stuff. This wasn't boring at all and I'm rather surprised by that.

We'll stick with the tag stuff and look at a match from Big Time Wrestling out of Detroit with the tag team champions the Hell's Angels facing JJ Dillon and Arnold Skaaland.

#### Hell's Angel's vs. Arnold Skaaland/Jim Dillon

The Angels (Ron and Paul Dupree in a biker gimmick) are tag champions here, which if the records I can find are correct, would put this at some

point in 1968 or 1969, making JJ a rookie. I'm pretty sure this is non-title. The Angels take forever to get out of their gear and it's Angel #1 vs. Dillon, who is a cowboy here, to start. #1 takes Jim down by the trunks and the Angels do a switch without the tag to ensure that they're the heels.

The Angels change again to stay on Jim's arm as we might be in a squash match here. We stick with the old school tactics here as the good guys make a tag but the referee doesn't see it so the biased referee won't let it count. A second attempt works a bit better and Skaaland cleans house to a big reaction.

Back in and #1 gets to try his luck with Arnold but #2 gets in a cheap shot from the apron to take over again. Choking ensues and the Angels cheat even more to keep Skaaland in trouble. The referee admonishes the champions long enough to allow a tag off to Dillon but the Angels quickly slam him down and #1 drops a top rope knee for the pin.

**Rating:** D. This was a really sloppy match as it felt like they were trying to have a squash but the good guys got in too much offense. Dillon was very green at this point but the only way to get better is to be in the ring. The Angels were nothing to see either, though they had the crowd into their heel antics.

I'll fit in a singles match to make this actually about Skaaland. This is from December 19, 1977.

LouAlbanovs. ArnoldSkaaland

We get our first story here as Arnold won Manager of the Year and Albano is ticked off about it, resulting in them fighting over it. The face, Arnold, jumps Lou during introductions to show he means business. Fans are WAY into this which always helps. Albano runs immediately and still has his jacket on. A foreign object ends that though and we're ready to go.

Super Mario needs a shirt while wrestling. Allegedly these two weigh the same thing but I have a problem believing that one for some reason. Somewhere around the 8th shot with it the referee sees it or at least thinks he sees it so he plays Find the Object in Albano's Pants. That's a good one to play at a party where there are no women or alcohol. Arnold gets it and beats on Albano with it, busting him open.

Arnold pounds away as Albano tries not to fall down. And so much for that theory as Albano hits the floor. For about the 5th time he adjusts his tights and then runs to the back for the relatively cheap count out. I say relatively as this sets up another match down the road I'd assume.

**Rating:** D. Well the crowd was into it if nothing else. The match itself sucked but when it's a battle of managers how much can you expect? It's less than five minutes long though and Skaaland (dang that's hard to type) made a comeback to a nice pop so this worked fine for what it was. Match was awful though from a wrestling standpoint which is what we're going for here.

Skaaland is a guy that was good for his time but just doesn't hold up all that well in modern wrestling. Now that being said, the fact that it was a different era means a lot. Skaaland was nicknamed the Golden Boy so having him be a generic guy like this makes sense. Also he sold tickets for the company as one of the top faces, even though he never won a singles title. He's an interesting piece of history but not much more than that.

On to Go Shiozaki who is best known for his time in Pro Wrestling Noah. Therefore, we'll start over there with Shiozaki challenging Nigel McGuinness for the ROH World Title on January 20, 2008.

ROH World Title: Nigel McGuinness vs. Go Shiozaki

The mat is green which is taking a bit of getting used to. Nigel ducks a big chop to start as we're still in the early feeling out process. The champion takes Go into the corner for some chops but this is Japan so it turns into a contest. Since that's going nowhere we hit the mat for a chinlock on Shiozaki that lasts all of five seconds. They head to the apron where Go tries a German suplex on the apron but settles for ramming Nigel's arm into the barricade. Another shot into the steel puts McGuinness down and a ram into the post makes him groan.

Nigel tries to sucker Go into chopping the post but Shiozaki fakes him out and chops Nigel again. The second attempt works a bit better and the chopping loses its power. This time Nigel is the one ramming his opponent's arm into the post before bending Go's hand around the piece of metal that connects the buckle to the ring. Back in and the champion takes Go down with chops of his own before avoiding a charge, sending Shiozaki's arm into the post. Nigel wraps it around the post again before putting on a Fujiwara armbar.

McGuinness gets all cocky as is his custom before putting on an armtrap chinlock, similar to a Tazmission. Now he sits on Go's back and cranks on the arm which has the fans interested. Shiozaki finally fights up but chops with the good arm, allowing Nigel to take over again. The Tower of London (Diamond Cutter off the top) is broken up so they trade forearms, with Go using the bad arm. A slam puts the champion down and a middle rope knee drop gets two.

Nigel blocks a superkick but gets taken down with a fisherman's buster for two more. Go gets crotched on the top and now the Tower of London connects for two. There's a seated armbar ala Leo Kruger's GC3 but Go is quickly in the ropes. A Tower of London off the apron knocks Shiozaki senseless but it takes awhile for him to get back in, meaning Alex only gets two. Back to the seated armbar but Go makes the ropes again.

Now Nigel gets creative by loading up a hammerlock belly to back superplex but Shiozaki counters into a cross body for two. Something

resembling Rolling Germans get two for Go and the final one sends Nigel into the corner. A great looking moonsault gets two and Shiozaki locks in a Kimura. Nigel makes the rope and is placed on the top, only to come back by crotching Shiozaki on the top rope. A middle rope lariat gets one as Shiozaki starts HULKING UP.

Go comes back with a BIG sitout brainbuster but can't follow up with a cover. They slug it out from their knees before trading pinning combinations for two each. Off to an Anaconda Vice by Nigel but Go breaks free with the bad arm and gets into the ropes as well. A series of strikes get two for Go and he hits a suplex into a sitout Rock Bottom but Nigel counters the cover into another seated armbar, finally getting the tap.

**Rating:** B+. I liked this a lot more than I was expecting to even though I've always been a fan of Nigel's work. The arm work paying off in the end helped this a lot as I was afraid they were going to keep building on that and then going absolutely nowhere with it. Good, good match here with Nigel getting to show off.

We'll continue our international theme by going to Mexico for a four way tag team match for Shiozaki/Atushi Aoki's AAA Tag Team Titles from Triplemania 18.

Tag Titles: Los Maniacos vs. Beer Money vs. Atsushi Aoki/Go Shiozaki vs. Nicho/Joe Lider

This is under elimination rules and Shiozako/Aoki are champions coming in. Los Maniacos are Silver Cain (Silver King from WCW who has lost his mask and Ultimo Gladiator). An interesting point here is that the champions are introduced by the wrong name with one guy not getting an announcement at all. Also from what I've read, only Konnan knew either their names or Beer Money's names. Cain basically is something like



Mr. America where everyone knows it's Silver King but officially it's a different guy as his name is different if that makes sense.

The wrong music plays for the champions as it's Beer Money's song instead. Ok here is Beer Money to the right music. They're part of the Foreign Legion tonight. See how the group works now? In the back the final team is coming to the ring but some guy in a suit says Konnan is out there and not to go after them. That would be Nicho/Lider who are La Hermandad 187 (the 187 Brotherhood). Nicho is more famous as Psicosis without the mask. The Japanese guys and Lider almost get into it before the match.

No tagging here again it seems. This is going to take some getting used to. Roode and someone are on the floor. Also cut out the wide shots. I can't see anyone specifically for the most part. Four in the ring and four on the floor at the moment. I think Beer Money is on the floor. It's the Japanese guys and Los Maniacos in there at the moment. Nicho who is apparently a millionaire is down.

Only the champions (Japanese guys remember) are staying in the ring and on their feet the whole time. One hits a frog splash to I think Lider for two. Beer Money vs. Japanese guys at the moment. I know I'm saying Japanese guys a lot but it's the best description I can give you in a short amount of time. Hermanadad gets in Konnan's face with chairs but the champions jump them to save K-Dawg.

Beer Money works on Nicho with a wheelbarrow/Codebreaker

combination. They set for the BEER MONEY thing but Hermanadad gets a pair of rollups for two each. Nicho vs. Aoki at the moment with the champion winning. Storm is ripping Cain's mask and almost has it off. Nicho vs. Aoki in the ring at the moment and Aoki is sent to the floor. Tope con Giro by Nicho takes down Aoki.

La Hermanadad beats on Aoki now until Shiozaki comes in. A middle rope Backstabber out of nowhere to Shiozaki puts him out and the champions are gone! Konnan FREAKS as we're down to three teams. Storm has a chair now and sets it up in the corner. Beer Money beats on the Hermanadad as we haven't seen much from the masked dudes. Beer Money screws up and Roode head winds up in Storm's crotch.

Los Manacos get into it again and go after 187 which is what I'm going to say instead of La Hermanadad. 187 is down but get up to hit stereo Downward Spirals to Beer Money. Storm takes what we would call a Mooregasm and then add...something which gets two on Storm. It was some double team move but it was hard to see what it was. Konnan distracts 187 again and a chair to the head of Lider by Storm ends them and we're down to Los Manacos vs. Beer Money for the titles.

Tower of Doom spot doesn't really work at all but it looked ok and got two for Roode. Nicho goes after Konnan with a chair but can't hit him. The fans are completely behind Manacos. Cain misses a moonsault and the slingshot DDT kills Gladiator as it's all Beer Money with the spinebuster to Cain. Heel miscommunication occurs though and it's Gladiator vs. Storm.

There are two referees in the ring for some reason. Spear takes down Storm for two. Roode and Cain have gone off to find a Bingo game or something. Storm hits a powerslam for two. Superkick by Storm misses and Cain hits a Death Valley Driver for the pin and the titles. HUGE pop for that as they're faces and Mexicans hold the titles again.

**Rating:** B-. This was a more fun match than the rest of them. While it was still hard to follow it was less difficult than the other matches. This lack of tagging thing is something I'm having issues getting used to. Either way, there was more of a flow here and I had a better idea of what was going on which is certainly a good thing.

We'll close it out in Kenta vs. Go Shiozaki from November 23, 2012 in the Global League Tournament. I'm aware that Kenta usually spells his name in all caps and I'm not typing it that way. Get over it.

### Kenta vs. Go Shiozaki

Kenta appears to be the big crowd favorite. They strike it out to start with Kenta getting the better of it via kicks to the chest and a running knee to the ribs. Kenta charges into a boot in the corner and is lifted up for a suplex before Go just drops him onto the floor. Go whips him into the barricade and they head back inside for a strike off until Shiozaki dropskicks him down for two.

They blow a spot in the corner where I believe Kenta was supposed to have a boot up so Go just awkwardly forearm him instead. Another attempt works a few seconds later with Kenta getting the boots up. Since this is Japan though, Go completely no sells it and hits him with a chop. There's a half crab but Kenta is quickly in the ropes for the break. Some running

forearms knock Go down and Kenta locks on an STF.

Go is about to get the rope so Kenta lets go and drops him with a knee to the ribs for two. A springboard missile dropkick and a running boot in the corner have Go in trouble but he explodes out with a clothesline. I can live with this as he stays down after the clothesline so it's not as bad. Kenta tries an arm lock but Go comes back with a hard shot to the head for two. Kenta's GTS (he invented it) is escaped, allowing Go to superkick him (Kenta doesn't go down of course) and get two off a kind of chinlock suplex.

That pretty awesome suplex into a sitout Rock Bottom is almost countered into a guillotine choke but Go powers Kenta up for two. A big running lariat gets two for Go and a superkick actually puts Kenta down for a second. Go loads up a modified pumphandle slam but Kenta counters into a Hell's Gate followed by the YES Lock, making Shiozaki tap out.

**Rating:** C. REALLY annoying no selling aside, this wasn't bad. I totally get why Kenta is such a smark favorite: he's basically a video game character as a wrestler with a lot of the American finishing moves as regular moves (yes I'm aware he was likely doing a lot of them first). The match wasn't doing much for me as Shiozaki worked much better as a face than the heel he was playing here.

Go Shiozaki is talented but he didn't do much to stand out for me. The McGuinnes match was good but I've seen Nigel have good matches with just about anybody. Shiozaki is a guy I've heard a few good things about but he's not someone that I have much of a desire to watch do anything more.

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# Smackdown – January 24, 2014: The Show They've Needed For Weeks

## Smackdown

Date: January 24, 2014

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Josh Matthews

It's the go home show for the Rumble and not a lot changed this past week on Raw. Batista is back and apparently people are still interested in him, meaning I can't imagine anyone else taking the Rumble at this point. Since it's Friday, I'm guessing we'll be getting a big tag match to close out the week. Let's get to it.

We open with an in memory of George Scott graphic. Always nice to see.

Opening sequence actually opens us up.

The main event tonight is a ten man tag with the Usos/Rhodes Brothers/Langston vs. Shield/New Age Outlaws.

The Real Americans are in the ring to start with Colter ranting about Big Show attacking him. Unfortunately his voice is better now and not as awesome as it was last week. We get a clip from two weeks ago of Big Show knocking Colter out cold which set up tonight's tag match with Show/Mysterio vs. the Real Americans. Colter doesn't think Mysterio is his real name either. Speaking of names, Colter comes up with various names for Big Show/Mysterio: the Border Jumping Buddies, Tacos Supremos Hold the Salsa and El Gordito and the Jumping Bean.

## Real Americans vs. Big Show/Rey Mysterio

Swagger charges at Big Show to start and is easily thrown down. Some forearm to the back send Jack running to the corner for a tag off to Cesaro who is thrown around as well. Show puts his foot on Cesaro's face and lifts him up by the arm for a kind of reverse curb stomp. Cesaro is tossed out to the floor and Mysterio takes him down with a seated senton off the apron. A kick to the face drops Swagger and we take a break. Back with Cesaro holding a chinlock on Mysterio until Rey fights up and gets two off a rollup.

Antonio doesn't like being covered so he Swings Mysterio around for a few seconds. Off to Swagger who counters catches a middle rope hurricanrana in midair, only to be sent face first into the middle buckle. Cesaro comes back in but the Real Americans get caught in a double DDT, allowing for the hot tag to Big Show. The monster hiptosses both Americans with ONE ARM. That's very cool looking, even if both of them helped with the throw. A 619 sets up the WMD and the splash off Big Show's shoulders for the pin on Cesaro at 8:52.

**Rating:** C-. The match was formula stuff but it made Big Show look good going into the showdown on Sunday. Mysterio was just kind of there but it's good to see him in the ring instead of on the injured list all the time. He's nowhere near what he used to be but at his age and with his knees held together with glue, it's about as good as you can expect.

Heyman comes out post match and tells Big Show to enjoy his health while he can, because there will be nothing to celebrate on Sunday. Big Show did throw Lesnar around on Monday, but it's only made Brock want to hurt Big Show even more. Lesnar will be WWE Champion after dealing with the giant.

## The Miz vs. Brodus Clay

Before the match, Wade Barrett's podium rises up and he informs us that

while the ten man tag will be awesome tonight, this is going to be one of the worst matches in WWE history. He starts the MIZ IS AWFUL chant and bangs his gavel in place of the five clap sequence. That's really not something you should say on your programming, even for a Miz match. Miz jumps Barrett while the crowd takes up the chant. Barrett keeps taking jabs at the match, calling it one of the worst things he's ever seen and thinking the crowd wants milk and cookies. He asks Clay to dance and the distraction lets Miz hits a DDT for the pin at 1:22.

Miz goes up to the podium but Barrett laughs down at him.

Rumble By The Numbers promo.

#### AJ Lee vs. Cameron

Non-title. AJ quickly takes her down but charges into a boot in the corner. Cameron stops to dance a bit before dropping a leg for two. A baseball slide puts Naomi down but she walks into a Shining Wizard for the pin at 1:32.

Post match Tamina goes after Cameron but Naomi makes the save and lays AJ out with a Bubba Bomb.

Raw ReBound shows Batista returning and laying out Alberto.

Shield says twenty seven other men are going to enter the Royal Rumble as hungry dogs. Those other people can pretend they're going to have a chance but it's just wishful thinking. All of the other men are casualties and Reigns says he'll win.

#### Ryback/Curtis Axel vs. Los Matadores

JBL thinks El Torito is a descendant of Mr. Ed. Ryback slams Diego down for an early two before Axel comes in to ram Diego into the corner. A

nice running dropkick keeps Diego in trouble, causing Josh to say Torito has a look of concern on his face. JBL: "HE'S A BULL!" Back to Ryback who toys with Diego even more before jumping off the middle rope into a pair of boots. Axel can't break up the hot tag attempt and Fernando comes in to clean house. A double arm DDT gets two on Axel but Ryback makes the save and throws Diego to the floor. Fernando throws Ryback out, only to get rolled up by Axel for the pin at 3:20.

**Rating:** C-. I believe that's Los Matadores' first loss, but thankfully they stayed undefeated for so long because they haven't been on TV all that much. They're just not an interesting team at all and I can't picture them lasting much longer without being relegated to Superstars. It's nice to see Axel get a pin as well.

Post match Torito IMMEDIATELY sends Axel to the floor and dives on him Ryback so the fans won't have their spirits crushed or something.

Here's Punk to address Kane making him #1 in the Rumble. We get a clip of Punk calling Kane a suck up last week, earning himself a chokeslam as well as a clip from Raw of Kane apologizing and getting knocked to the floor. Punk talks about the Authority's lapdog making him the #1 entrant in the Rumble to stack the deck against him. That's what he expected from HHH and Stephanie but it just motivates him to become WWE Champion again.

He's done a lot in the WWE but the one glaring omission is winning the Rumble. Now that he's #1 it might be the toughest match he's ever competed in, but that's what you have to expect if you call yourself the best in the world. On Sunday he's going to punch the lion in the face and do everything he can to be the last man standing.

This brings out Kane who says that Punk has a .000000186 chance of winning, or one in five hundred million. Maybe his odds are a little better because he's best in the world though. Punk says never tell him the odds and that it's sad to see what has happened to the Devil's Favorite Demon. Is he the Authority's Favorite Statistician now? Punk



isn't worried because the #1 entrant has won before and he's been the best since day one.

We recap Bryan vs. Wyatt who have a match on Sunday. I'm actually looking forward to that showdown.

### Wyatt Family vs. Prime Time Players

Harper pounds on Young in the corner to start before kicking his head off with a big boot. Off to Rowan who takes off the mask to reveal that hideous face of his. Harper loads up a whip to send Rowan into the corner but instead Rowan whips Harper into the other corner to take out Titus. The discus lariat ends Young at 1:05 in a total squash.

Darren gets Sister Abigail post match and Bray says he'll change the world. You can hear some Bo Dallas in his voice as he speaks, only to have Daniel Bryan cut him off. Bryan says listen to these people because they don't fear fate, the reapers or burning with the saints. On Sunday, Daniel will no longer be trapped in Bray's madness, but Bray will be trapped in Daniel's prison. He'll find out who the real monster is as the fans chant YES.

### Fandango vs. Kofi Kingston

During the entrances we get an inset interview from Kofi who says that he's done some amazing things to stay in the Rumble, but this Sunday he's going to perform his greatest feat of all: win the Royal Rumble and go on to headline Wrestlemania. Simple, to the point, ties into his character's history. I'd love these sort of promos to be more common.

A shoulder block puts Kofi down and Fandango gyrates a bit. Back up and Kofi throws him over the top and out to the corner (nice touch) and we get an Emma sighting. Fandango rams him into the apron to take over and something resembling a Pele gets two on Kofi back inside. Kingston pops

back up and sends Fandango into the ropes for Trouble in Paradise and the pin at 2:57. Just a match.

Rumble By The Numbers Part II.

Long recap of Cena vs. Orton.

New Age Outlaws/Shield vs. Usos/Cody Rhodes/Goldust/Big E. Langston

Jimmy and Rollins get things going with Seth stomping him down in the corner. They run the ropes a few times until Jimmy stops to dance and grab an arm. Ambrose comes in and has his arm worked on for a few minutes before a right hand gets two. Langston gets the tag and charges into Ambrose's ribs in the corner before hitting a series of backbreakers to keep Dean in trouble. Dean gets a boot up in the corner and tags in Reigns for a big running clothesline.

Big E. gets triple teamed for a bit but just powers Shield off and makes the tag to Cody. Things speed up a bit with a springboard missile dropkick and the Disaster Kick but Gunn comes in for a shot from behind to take over. We take a break and come back with Cody sunset flipping Rollins for two before Seth takes him down again. Gunn gets the tag and drops a knee for two. The heels continue their tagging with Reigns hammering on his back and holding him in place with a cravate.

Dean comes back in with a spinning belly to back suplex for two but Cody fights out of a belly to back superplex and hits the moonsault press on the now legal Reigns. Goldust gets the hot tag to clean house and even hits a top rope hurricanrana to blow everyone's minds. A powerslam gets two on Road Dogg and here's Langston for the Big Ending on Rollins but Roman makes the save with a spear.

Jey superkicks Reigns down and Jimmy adds the Superfly Splash but throws Dean to the floor instead of covering. The Usos load up the stereo dives

but Billy cuts off Jimmy and takes him down with the Fameasser. Cody comes back in for the Disaster Kick but Roadie takes him down with the pumphandle slam, only to have Goldust grab a rollup but Shield makes a save as the match is thrown out at 13:20.

**Rating:** B-. This was an old formula tag match but the very hot finish helped it out a lot. I'm a sucker for the parade of finishers to set up the ending and when you have ten guys it's quite a long parade. The DQ ending is a smart move here as you don't want anyone doing a job going into the Rumble or a title match.

Everybody gets in and we get the traditional huge brawl with everyone else announced for the Rumble (other than Batista of course) coming to join in the fight. CM Punk comes out to a BIG pop to get in on the brawl as the show goes off the air.

**Overall Rating:** B. This is the show they've been needing to have since the beginning of the year. Tonight was about the Rumble match itself with people wanting to go to Wrestlemania, which is the whole point of the show this Sunday. The other matches got some nice build as well and for once I'm excited for the entire show. Tonight wasn't supposed to be about good matches or the in ring action and it wasn't the focus. Good episode tonight which did its job.

### Results

Big Show/Rey Mysterio b. Real Americans – Splash to Cesaro

The Miz b. Wade Barrett – DDT

AJ Lee b. Cameron – Shining Wizard

Curtis Axel/Ryback b. Los Matadores – Rollup to Fernando

Wyatt Family b. Prime Time Players – Discus lariat to Young

Kofi Kingston b. Fandango – Trouble in Paradise

Usos/Big E. Langston/Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. Shield/New Age Outlaws via DQ when all three members of Shield came into the ring

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2012: Kick Him In The Head!

## Royal Rumble 2012

Date: January 29, 2012

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 18,121

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Booker T

We wrap things up here with last year's show. The Rumble is back to the thirty entrant variety which is probably the best move all around. The odds on favorite is Jericho who returned very recently before this show. Other than that we've got Daniel Bryan defending his newly won world title against Big Show and Henry in a cage, along with Punk defending against Ziggler. Let's get to it.

The opening video is of course about going to Wrestlemania.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry

Bryan is champion and beat Show at TLC by cashing in his MITB case in 45 seconds. Show beat Henry at the same show and ran over Bryan's girlfriend AJ on Raw to set all this up. This is one fall to a finish and it's

pin/submission/escape. Bryan immediately goes for the corner but Henry pulls him down and Show runs Bryan over for two. Show crushes Henry against the cage wall but has to stop to pull Bryan back inside. Bryan tries to run up again but Show catches him by the ankle and slams him back in.

Show loads up the WMD but hits the cage wall instead. The champion fires off some kicks but gets headbutted right back down. Bryan kicks the knee out even harder and fires off some kicks to Henry to keep the other monster down. He goes for the door but you know this isn't ending that quickly. Henry makes the stop and demands that the referee CLOSE THAT DOOR. Show superkicks Henry down and it's his turn to take over for awhile.

Bryan gets slammed down but Henry is back up again. A few punches put Show down because a dozen chair shots usually can't, but a few punches can. Actually that's a great way to keep Henry looking strong. The fans are cheering for Bryan as Henry and Show collide to put all three guys down. Show gets back up and clotheslines Bryan down a few times before superkicking him in the face. The chokeslam is countered and Bryan hits a tornado DDT on Show for two.

The LeBell (NO!) Lock is put on Show but Henry breaks it up in about a second. The WMD gets two on Henry but Bryan makes the save, which ticks Show off. Bryan SPRINTS up the cage but Show chases after him and grabs Bryan before he can get out. Bryan sits on the top of the cage and pounds away, only to be caught again. The champion is literally hanging from Show's wrist before finally letting go and falling to the floor to retain the title.

**Rating:** D+. This really wasn't all that great. At the end of the day, it was a lot of the same sequence over and over again with Show and Henry not having a ton of interaction at all. The ending didn't look great either and I'm not sure why Show would just hold him out over the floor like that. This falls under the category of ".....really?" as it's hard to buy Bryan keeping the belt here.

Long video on Cena and all the stuff he does for WWE. The man is insanely

committed to that company.

### Divas of Doom/Bella Twins vs. Eve Torres/Alicia Fox/Tamina/Kelly Kelly

The Divas of Doom are Beth and Natalya. Natalya and Tamina start things off and they collide a few times. Tamina slaps her in the face before chopping Nattie down for two. Off to Eve for that bouncing moonsault for two. Since that's a pretty lame move, Natalya charges her into the corner and brings in Beth who blocks a rolling splash with knees to Eve's back.

Off to let's say Nikki for some basic stomps to the back and a quickly broken chinlock. Jerry is asked what he likes about the Bellas and he can't even get an answer out. Not hot tag brings in Alicia who is immediately sent into the corner and chinlocked as well. Alicia finally counters by flipping Nikki forward and makes the actual hot tag to Kelly. There's the screaming headscissors and a faceplant for two. Everything breaks down and almost everyone heads to the floor, where Kelly hits a HUGE dive to take everyone out. Back in and Beth SLAPS herself in to hit the Glam Slam on Kelly for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. This was your usual Divas match: they did their "sexy" spots, they had barely there outfits, Kelly screamed a lot, Beth beat up Kelly to end things. One interesting note from a year later: would they even be able to put together an eight Divas tag now? I'm thinking through the roster and I don't know if I can name eight girls on the main shows right now.

We recap Ryder getting hurt at the hands of Kane. This was during the period where Ryder went from one of the hottest things in the company and US Champion to a rag doll that Kane destroyed over and over and over in the span of a few weeks until his push was completely destroyed. Eve blamed Cena for Ryder having his back broken for some reason.

Ryder is wheeled in and patronized by Johnny Ace (remember him?). Ace has a private room set up for Ryder but Eve comes up to yell at Ace first. Not much here but it's setting up stuff later on tonight.

### Kane vs. John Cena

This is when Kane had the welder's mask look. Brawl to start with Kane beating Cena down into the corner as the fans are split on Johnny. A clothesline puts them both on the floor where Kane is sent knees first into the steps. Back in and Cena can't hit the AA on Kane. That makes sense as after all, Kane is probably 175lbs lighter than Show who Cena throws around with near ease most of the time.

Kane kicks Cena down and gets two off an uppercut. A suplex gets the same and it's off to a chinlock. Cena fights up and is sent into the buckle for his efforts followed by Kane's stupid smother hold. John tries to counter into a Crossface but Kane comes out with a side slam. The idea here is that Cena can't get anything going at all. The top rope clothesline takes Cena's head off but Cena pops up and hits his shoulder block.

The Shuffle is countered by a grab of Cena's throat and a big boot gets two. Cena blocks a superplex and hits the Shuffle off the top. That's certainly a new one. The AA is countered by an elbow to the face and Kane kicks Cena out to the floor. Booker talks about how Cena is a good kid. I don't think I ever recall Cena being called a kid since like 2004. Kane pounds on Cena in the aisle and that's a double countout so we can do this match again next month.

**Rating:** D+. I know that's a common theme tonight but it fits here again. These two didn't work all that well together and the story was even worse. Then again, this was nothing more than giving Cena something to do for a few months until he could get ready for the biggest match of his career. This didn't work for the most part.

The fight continues into the back where Kane finds a chair to lay to lay out Cena. To the shock of no one paying attention, Kane finds the door to Ryder's private room and kicks the door in. Ryder is taken to the ring and tombstoned as Eve screams. Cena comes out to try to save Eve but gets chokeslammed by Kane who walks away. Ryder does a stretcher job, but somehow it would get even worse for him in the coming weeks.

BE A STAR!

Zack is wheeled out and Cena is booed for it. That's the part of this

story that never held up for me: why is this Cena's responsibility? Ryder was the United States Champion. He should be able to defend himself.

We get a video on the Rock just like Cena got earlier. It's shot in the back of Rock's car and is more like a mini documentary. It focuses on how insane Rock's life is and all of the stuff he does around the world.

#### Drew McIntyre vs. Brodus Clay

This is right after Brodus debuted as the Funkasaurus so he was still a new character at this point. Brodus dances a lot, Drew punches him in the corner, Brodus headbutts him and hits the cross body (called WHAT THE FUNK) for the pin in about a minute.

Buy Slim Jims! For the troops!

We recap Punk vs. Ziggler who is challenging Punk on Ace's behalf. This is during the "Ace is boring" phase where Punk made fun of him no matter what he did, so Ace helped Ziggler get a win over Punk to earn a title shot. Ace is also guest referee tonight just because. He's openly admitted he's going to screw Punk out of the title tonight, so HHH is going to evaluate his job status the next night on Raw, meaning Ace has to play nice.

#### Raw World Title: CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Punk is defending and Ace is referee. Johnny Ace is John Laurinitis but that's a hard name to spell. Before the match, Ace says he'll be the outside referee. Ok then. Wait we're still not ready to go as Ace throws Vickie out as well. We finally get going and Ziggler tries a quick Fameasser which is countered into a failed GTS attempt. Punk tells Dolph it was that close. They feel each other out a bit longer until Ziggler starts strutting.

Punk finally gets his hands on Ziggler and puts on an abdominal stretch, complete with a wrapped toe and slicking back his hair ala Ziggler. Dolph heads to the floor and gets taken out by a suicide dive but shoves Punk off the top rope once they get back inside. Ziggler drops about eight elbows in a row and a jumping version gets two. We hit the chinlock with



Ziggler cranking on the head way more than necessary.

The champ starts firing off chops and strikes before getting caught in the sleeper. That goes nowhere but neither does Punk's Anaconda Vice attempt. Back to the sleeper but Dolph can't get it on all the way. Instead there's a perfect dropkick for two on Punk but the Fameasser is countered into a helicopter bomb for two. A swinging neckbreaker by the champ puts Dolph into the corner where the knee/bulldog combination actually works.

The GTS is countered into a slingshot but Punk lands on the middle rope. He comes off with a spinning cross body but Ziggler rolls through for a near fall in a cool sequence. The high kick gets two for Punk as does the Macho Elbow, drawing a Randy Savage chant. The GTS is countered again and the referee goes down as per the requirement in a world title mach. Punk hooks the Vice but Ace is checking on the down referee. Then Punk gets a rollup and there's STILL no referee.

Ace sends the referee back in as Punk loads up the GTS, but Ziggler's legs knock Ace to the floor. Ace sees the pin but refuses to count because he thinks Punk did it on purpose. Ziggler counters another GTS attempt into the Fameasser for two before pounding away a bit. The champ comes back with a slingshot and the GTS gets a pin from both referees to retain the title.

**Rating:** B+. This took awhile to get going as we were all waiting on the Ace stuff. The feud would go on for weeks until Jericho finally showed up to give Punk someone with charisma to feud with. The near falls at the end were a lot better than Ace, but it occurs to me that this was pretty much the same match he had last year. Good stuff though.

Rumble by the Numbers:

30 Superstars

1 winner

31 Hall of Famers in the Rumble

21 main events those Hall of Famers have been in at Wrestlemania

695 entrants who have been eliminated

39 entrants eliminated by Michaels, a record (Kane is second at 35)

13 consecutive Rumbles for Kane

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

194,107lbs that have been in the Rumble, or over 97 tons, or 430 Big Show

421,883 people who have attended the Rumble

62:12 Rey Mysterio spent in the Rumble in 2006, a record

3 wins for Austin

1 second that Santino lasted in 2009

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

1, the entrant that has produced the same amount of winners as #30 at two each

27, the entrant with more winners than any other at four

55 percent of winners that have won the title at Wrestlemania

### Royal Rumble

The Miz is #1 and talks about how he's going back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. His former apprentice Alex Riley is #2 which isn't really surprising given how RANDOM these draws are. I always liked Riley and he always got a good reaction, which is clearly why he doesn't get on TV more. Riley pounds away to start and runs Miz over with a forearm but walks into a big boot. Maybe it's the old school fan in me but I don't like a 6'0 guy using a big boot. Miz talks trash and low bridges Riley out with ease.

R-Truth, Miz's former partner, is #3. Truth fires off some kicks and avoids the Finale before hitting a kind of powerslam. Miz gets sent to the apron for the second time but Truth turns his back to watch Cody come out at #4. A quick Disaster Kick puts Truth down (Cole says it hits Miz

because those two are so hard to tell apart) and Truth gets double teamed for awhile. He manages to send Cody to the apron but gets caught in the Reality Check as the clock seems to be speeding up.

Justin Gabriel is #5 and things speed WAY up. A big spinwheel kick puts Miz down before Cody goes nuts on Gabriel in the corner. Primo is #6 to keep things low key to start. Actually he speeds things up as well and hits a sweet headscissors out of the corner to take Gabriel down. Truth hits the spinning forearm on Cody, only to be dumped out by Miz a second later. Since he's still crazy, Truth pulls Miz to the floor and lays him out on the outside.

Mick Foley is #7 to fire up the crowd a little bit. He dumps Primo almost immediately before getting beaten on by Cody. Foley looks really old and slow here but to be fair, he is in fact old and slow. In a HILARIOUS bit, Ricardo Rodriguez is #8 but comes out in an old banged up, rusted out rental car. He's even got the Del Rio scarf to hide some of his hideous pale body. We get a HUGE Ricardo chant as Foley and Gabriel have no idea what to do here.

Ricardo takes Cody down and pounds away before proposing an alliance with Foley of all people. They actually do team up and toss Gabriel, allowing Ricardo to do a CM Punk knee slide. We keep the comedy going with Santino at #9 and Ricardo runs from the Cobra. Santino beats on Ricardo and literally rolls him around the ring before pulling his trunks up and tossing Rodriguez.

Now we get my favorite spot of the match as Santino puts on the Cobra and Mick puts on Socko and it's TIME FOR A DUEL!!! Before they can collide though it's Epico at #10 but he falls to the powers of the socks and is out almost immediately. The socks COLLIDE until Miz and Cody pop back in (neither was eliminated) and dump Santino. Miz gets Socko but Cody dumps Mick. Fun comedy bit here to give us a good first act to the match.

Kofi Kingston is #11 and hits a double springboard clothesline before hitting a double Boom Drop. In at #12 is Jerry Lawler (Cole: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???" ) and he causes Miz to hit Cody by mistake. Lawler speeds things up and hits the middle rope punch with the lowered strap, only to

be put out by Cody. Ezekiel Jackson is #13 and gets to do the usual power moves on each guy while the others lay around.

Jinder Mahal is #14 and the fans start chanting USA, even though the only two Americans in this match are Rhodes and Miz. Great Khali comes in at #15 and Mahal panics. Everyone gets chops and Mahal is out in just a few seconds. Jackson tries to pound away and is put out almost immediately as well. Hunico is #16 on that stupid bicycle of his and hits a spinning cross body on Miz and his Angle Slam on Cody.

Khali chops Hunico down as the ring is staying relatively empty. Booker T is #17 to surprise Cole. You would think he would have noticed that the man sitting next to him for over two hours wasn't wearing pants but he never was considered that bright. Now we get the spot of the match as Miz shoves Kofi to the floor but Kofi holds himself up by his hands. Miz shoves Kofi into a handstand but Kingston WALKS ON HIS HANDS ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE STEPS to get back in. FREAKING AWESOME MAN!

Dolph Ziggler is #18 as the ring is starting to get full. Hacksaw Jim Duggan makes his annual return at #19 to pop the crowd huge. He cleans house for a bit and we get a DOUBLE NOGGIN KNOCKER on Miz and Rhodes. Cody avoids a charge in the corner though and dumps Duggan in less than a minute. That's the best idea at the end of the day. Miz and Cody team up to put out Booker and Khali at the same time.

We complete the trio with Michael Cole at #20. At the moment we've got Cole, Miz, Rhodes, Kingston, Hunico and Ziggler in the ring. Kharma returns at #21 in her only WWE match ever. She hits Cole so hard she knocks his headgear off so Cole eliminates himself. Well he gets to the apron where King and Booker eliminate him. Ziggler tells Kharma to get out so she DRILLS him. Kharma dumps Hunico but Ziggler sneaks up and eliminates her (Booker calls this doing the impossible. Not really Book.) to a ton of heat.

Sheamus is #22 to give us some A level star power. Well maybe B+ level. Things speed up with Sheamus destroying everyone and tossing Kofi out. There are the ten forearms in the ropes to Cody and ten to Miz as well. The Zig Zag is countered and Road Dogg is another surprise return at #23.

He gets to clean house for a bit and earns a "you still got it" chant. In far less than 90 seconds, Jey Uso is #24.

Everyone pairs off until Jack Swagger is #25. After a few suplexes everything settles down into its usual brawling phase until Barrett is #26. He throws out Roadie and stomps away on a lot of people. David Otunga gets the lucky spot at #27 and poses a lot before he comes out. Not a lot happens so Orton comes in at #28 to pick things up a bit. Remember we're in his hometown so everyone goes nuts.

Cody breaks up the RK0 on Barrett so Randy hits the Elevated DDT on both Cody and Ziggler at the same time because he can. There's an RK0 to Barrett and he's out. Chris Jericho, complete with a blackout of the arena, makes his return at #29. He's still a face at this point and dumps Otunga to a good reaction. Big Show is #30 which was considered a letdown at the time. Dude, he was world champion a month ago. That's hardly Darren Young coming out.

As Show comes in he pulls Swagger out from the floor, giving us a final grouping of Miz, Rhodes, Ziggler, Sheamus, Orton, Jericho and Big Show. That's a pretty solid grouping. Show dumps Cody and Miz at the same time to get us down to five. Show tosses Ziggler as well to get us down to four. The big man cleans house but walks into an RK0, allowing Orton and Sheamus to pick him up and Randy clotheslines him out. Jericho dumps Orton immediately thereafter and we're down to two.

The fans are entirely behind Jericho here so Sheamus runs him over a few times. Jericho's bulldog is countered but Sheamus can't throw him over the corner. Jericho charges into the Irish Curse but Sheamus can't hit the High Cross. We get a great false finish with Jericho clotheslining Sheamus to the apron and then knocking him down to the point where Sheamus is hanging on by his leg. Sheamus comes back in with the slingshot shoulder but the Brogue Kick is countered into the Walls.

After the hold is broken Jericho gets knocked to the apron where he BARELY hangs on. They go to the top rope and both fall to the apron, meaning if they hit the floor they're out. Both guys get back in and there's the Codebreaker to Sheamus. Jericho gets Sheamus upside down but

can't get him out. A shot to the face ticks Sheamus off and he catches a Codebreaker attempt to put Jericho on the apron. The Brogue Kick sends Sheamus to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** A-. This is one of those Rumbles that is great fun as you watch it live but it loses some steam on a second viewing. They spent a bit too much time on nostalgia and funny ideas here but they were still really good ideas. The ending with Sheamus and Jericho ROCKED and I have no idea why they never got to have a long PPV match. This is a really good Rumble but it never reaches that excellent level that some of them get to.

Sheamus celebrates a lot to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. The Rumble is a unique show as it has a way to save itself from a bad first half. That's what happened here as the last two matches were certainly good enough to save it from the horrible first few matches. As usual the last two guys would both get world title shots with the winner getting the opening match instead of the real main event, but going on before Rock vs. Cena is hardly torture.

### Ratings Comparison

Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Bella Twins/Divas of Doom vs. Alicia Fox/Kelly Kelly/Eve Torres/Tamina

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Kane vs. John Cena

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Brodus Clay vs. Drew McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: B

Redo: B+

Royal Rumble

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

Just like last year, not much difference here.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/01/29/royal-rumble-2012/>

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2011: The Rumble Grows Up

## Royal Rumble 2011

Date: January 30, 2011

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,113

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

This is a weird Rumble as for one year only they tried having forty people in the Rumble instead of the usual thirty. It didn't quite work so they never tried it again, but for this year as a result there are only four matches on the whole card: two world titles, a Divas match and the Rumble itself. This is one of those rumbles I barely remember. Let's get to it.

The opening video is exactly what you would expect.

### Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Edge is defending and if he uses the spear here, Ziggler wins the title because Vickie is a crooked boss. Dolph takes over early and pounds on Edge in the corner but gets whipped across the ring to shift momentum. This is during Cole's heel phase so he's very annoying at this point. A gutbuster gets two for the champion and he takes things to the floor. Ziggler is rammed into the apron and the barricade for good measure as Edge stands tall.

As they come back in, Ziggler grabs a neckbreaker for two and hits an elbow to the chest. Off to a chinlock as Dolph stays on the neck. The fans cheer for Edge of course and he fights up, only to get caught in a middle rope sunset flip. Edge comes back with a slingshot into the buckle and now Dolph is in trouble. A rollup out of the corner gets two for Edge but Dolph hits another neckbreaker for two of his own.

Off to the chinlock until Edge rolls out to the apron. Ziggler knocks him into the barricade and it's back inside for the chinlock. Edge fights up



but they both try cross bodies to put both guys down. Ziggy misses a Stinger Splash in the corner and Edge catches him in a flapjack to put both guys down again. Edge counters the Fameasser into a sitout powerbomb for two more but he can't follow up.

The champion goes up but has to fight out of a superplex. Ziggler gets knocked down and hit by a top rope cross body, only for Ziggler to roll through for two. Now the fans start cheering for Ziggler as he gets two off a dropkick. The Zig Zag misses and Edge busts out the Edgecator of all things. Dolph grabs the rope so Edge dives at him on said ropes, only to clothesline himself on them.

The Fameasser gets two and both guys are down again. A big boot puts Ziggler down for about the seventh time and Edge gets into spear position. Like an idiot, Vickie reminds him of this, allowing Dolph to catch Edge in the sleeper. Edge rolls out of it and hits the Impaler for two as Vickie pulls the referee out of the ring. Vickie slaps Edge but the champion dodges a charging Dolph into a rollup for two.

She slaps Edge AGAIN so here's Kelly Kelly to take Vickie down. In the melee the Zig Zag hits for two and a BIG pop on the kickout. There's the sleeper and while trying to escape it, Edge knocks the referee down. Edge escapes the hold with a kind of Stunner and realizes there's no referee or Vickie so there's the spear to Ziggler. The referee wakes up and Edge hits an Unprettier to retain the title.

**Rating:** A-. Good stuff here again although the ending is kind of stupid. Eventually Edge would be stripped of the title for using the spear (I can't remember if it was here or another match) and Ziggler would have a stupid 45 minutes or less reign. I don't think anyone, including Dolph, considers that a real reign but hey, Ziggler is a former world champion so we have to respect him, right WWE?

We recap Orton vs. Miz. The champion Miz cashed in MITB on Orton back in November and beat him in a tables match at TLC. Tonight it's an actual match which means Miz is likely in trouble.

Miz says he'll win.

## Raw World Title: The Miz vs. Randy Orton

Miz has Riley with him here. Orton pounds away to start as Cole is already on his knees to suck Miz off. The champ is knocked out to the floor and gets sent into the barricades a few time. Back in and Orton kicks him in the face before stomping away a bit. Cole is already on one of his rants about how noble Miz is in comparison to Edge. Orton chokes on the ropes a bit as Cole says that Orton should have stated in advance that he wanted to brawl.

Riley finally guillotines Orton on the top rope to give Miz a chance. Orton shrugs the offense off and slugs Miz down, only to miss a running knee in the corner. Cole stays on his rant about how awesome Miz is as Riley interferes some more. Cole high fives Riley and Miz hooks a chinlock for a bit. Striker continues his brilliance by saying Miz is working on the midsection to set up the SKULL Crushing Finale. A running knee to Orton's face gets two and it's back to the chinlock.

Randy blocks a German Suplex and elbows Miz down to break the momentum. Miz comes right back with a big boot to the face for two and the champion is getting frustrated. Miz goes up and gets crotched right back down, allowing Orton to hit his daddy's superplex for two. Randy starts his comeback with the clotheslines and the backbreaker to send Miz to the apron. Why would you go there against Orton? Perhaps it's because he can backdrop Orton out to the floor to counter and have Riley stomp away a bit.

A top rope ax handle gets two for Miz so he pounds away on Orton's head. Back to the chinlock but Orton fights out of this one much faster. Not that it matters though as Orton gets sent through the ropes and out to the floor where Miz catapults him into the post. Orton gets back in at nine and is all fired up, only to get punched into the corner. Randy comes back with a clothesline and the powerslam before hitting the circle stomp.

Riley breaks up something like a powerbomb, allowing Miz to hit a modified Reality Check for two. Both finishers are countered and Orton hits an Angle Slam of all things for two. I vaguely remember him using

that around this time. Miz's attempt at walking out fails but he gets in something we can't see for two back inside.

Randy gets two off a rollup and there's the Elevated DDT. Orton loads up the RK0 but here's the New Nexus for a distraction. Riley tries to come in but in a great looking spot, Orton LAUNCHES Riley over the top (and over the referee) onto Nexus. The RK0 hits but Punk runs in with a GTS to keep the belt on Miz. Cole literally jumps for joy.

**Rating:** B. I was digging this match a lot and the ending would wind up making a lot more sense than it does on paper here. While Punk would obviously go on to feud with Punk for a few months, Miz would face Jerry Lawler of all people at Elimination Chamber before moving on to the main event of Wrestlemania. Good stuff here though and one of Miz's best matches ever. Gee you hear that a lot when Orton is the opponent don't you?

Dashing Cody Rhodes will not be here tonight because of his shattered face. This would lead to Dr. Cody Doom which was pretty awesome and then wound up being wasted.

Fans say who they think is going to win the Rumble.

Divas Title: Natalya vs. Laycool

Nattie beat them in a handicap match to win the title and this is the rematch. Before anything gets going though, we have an e-mail from the anonymous GM. We're going to make it a four way just for the sake of making it a fourway and we want to have a new champion.

Divas Title: Michelle McCool vs. Layla vs. Eve Torres vs. Natalya

Nattie is defending as I said and this is one fall to a finish. Laycool goes after both other chicks to start and Eve gets double teamed. Natalya comes back with a slingshot to send Layla into Michelle as Matt actually tries to analyze this match. We get down to Laycool squaring off but before they do anything, Eve and Nattie come back in.

Layla breaks up the Sharpshooter on Eve so Natalya puts the Sharpshooter on BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE. Layla hits the neckbreaker on Eve to send her to

the floor but Michelle kicks Eve out to the floor. Michelle misses a bit boot and takes Layla's head off by mistake. She and the champ fight to the floor, allowing Eve to sneak in and steal the pin with a moonsault.

**Rating:** D+. That might become my default rating for Divas matches as most of them fall into the same category: not bad but nothing worth seeing at all for the most part. The double Sharpshooter was cool but it's a five second sequence out of a five minute match. Also, why am I supposed to be excited about Eve winning the title when she wasn't even important enough to put into the match in the first place?

Michelle is mad because she had Natalya covered at the same time but the referee didn't see it.

A cleanshaven Daniel Bryan is excited for the Rumble because he could win. He's with Gail at this point and the Bells come up to offer their condolences for trying to hook up with Bryan. The Bellas imply they're better looking than Gail and a fight breaks out.

Rumble By The Numbers time!

40 entrants

1 winner

24 winners

656 losing entrants

39 eliminations by Shawn, a record

26 WWE Hall of Famers who have competed

183,932lbs that has competed in the Rumble, or 92 tons or 492 Big Shows

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001, a record

13 straight Rumbles for Kane, also a record

62:12 Mysterio lasted in the 2006 Rumble

1 second, the record for shortest time in the Rumble, held by Santino Marella

3 wins by Austin

2, the number of wins that spot #1 has produced, the same as #30

70% of winners have gone on to win the title at Mania

### Royal Rumble

40 entrants this year and it's Punk at #1 and before #2 comes out, here's the Corre (Barrett, Jackson, Slater and Gabriel) to surround Punk. They jump him until Punk's Nexus guys come out for the save. The GM sends an e-mail that says everyone not named CM Punk needs to get out or they're out of the Rumble. Anyway Daniel Bryan is #2 and the internet explodes.

They speed things up to start and Bryan fires off some kicks to the ribs. Striker talks about how the internet loves this match as Bryan is sent to the apron. The dueling chants begin and Bryan misses a dropkick in the corner. Justin Gabriel is #3 and immediately goes after Punk. Bryan clotheslines CM down and Gabriel misses the 450, allowing Bryan to dump Justin out.

Zack Ryder, still a heel, is #4. He immediately takes Bryan down and hits the Broski Boot to both guys. Bryan launches Ryder into the air for a Rough Ryder into Punk, only to get dumped to the floor by Daniel. Back to Punk vs. Bryan until William Regal is #5. He starts busting out the knees to the face and some suplexes before hitting the knee trembler to Punk. The student and the teacher (Bryan and Regal) slug it out before Punk kicks the teacher in the head. Bryan kicks Punk in the head for kicking Regal in the head and only Daniel is left standing.

Ted DiBiase is #6 along with Maryse. Bryan rips off kicks to Regal before trying to dump Ted out. John Morrison is #7 to a BIG pop. He comes in (after slipping) with a slingshot kick to Regal and the Flying Chuck to Punk. A C4 takes Bryan down but DiBiase dumps Morrison to the apron. As Regal is eliminated, we get at the time the best Rumble save ever, as Morrison is knocked from the apron but catches himself on the barricade.

His feet never touch as he pulls himself up to the barricade, tightrope walks down to the steps, jumps to said steps, kicks Regal in the head, and gets back in. That blew my mind live.

Yoshi Tatsu (Striker calls him the Poison Fist of the Pacific Rim because Striker likes to think he's smart) is #8 and goes right after Punk. Husky Harris is #9 and he beats everyone not named Punk before standing guard over his leader. Chavo Guerrero is #10 as these intervals are getting really short. Chavo loads up Three Amigos on DiBiase but Punk breaks it up. Now Punk takes two of them but Morrison breaks it up at two. So this time Morrison takes two suplexes but BRYAN breaks it up and finally Daniel takes all three suplexes.

Chavo takes Harris down with a middle rope missile dropkick and Mark Henry is #11. For some reason Chavo dives on him and is immediately dumped out. Yoshi is sent out as well as JTG is #12. Michael McGillicutty is #13 and he takes out JTG almost immediately before teaming up with Harris to dump DiBiase. Christ Masters is #14 and puts Punk to the apron with the Masterlock until McGillicutty makes the save. Masters and Bryan slug it out until Otunga is #15, giving Punk and the Nexus four members.

They gang up on and toss Bryan pretty easily and there goes Masters as well. There goes Morrison too and the elimination of Henry clears the ring. Tyler Reks from ECW gets to come in at #16 and you can figure out what happens to him in about 40 seconds. Vladimir Kozlov is #17 but the numbers catch up with him and it's Punk who gets to do the honors. We're just waiting for Cena to come out now.

Instead it's R-Truth at #18 and it's the same result. The only highlight is Punk hitting the knee in the corner and saying WHAT'S UP with a big goofy grin on his face. There goes Truth but Great Khali returns at #19 to scare Punk half to death. He fights all of the Nexus off and manages to dump Harris which is a big breakthrough. Khali chops Punk down and Mason Ryan, also of the Nexus, is #20. After a brief slugout he puts Khali out and we're right back where we were.

In our second major return of the Rumble, Booker T is #21 and Striker FREAKS. Booker fires off as many kicks as he can and hits the Bookend on

McGillicutty. You know we're getting the Spinarooni but Ryan throws Booker out as soon as it's over. Punk: "WE'RE GOING TO WRESTLEMANIA!" All hope seems to be lost but heeeeeeeeeeeere's Cena at #22. The hometown boy charges at the ring and puts out McGillicutty, Ryan and Otunga to get us down to one on one.

Cena pounds away and escapes the GTS before a double clothesline puts both guys down. Hornswoggle is #23 and is immediately kicked down by Punk. Atta boy CM! Punk loads up the GTS but Cena escapes and this the AA to toss Punk out. In next is Tyson Kidd at #24 and he gets caught between Cena and Horny. The Swogg busts out a headscissors before Cena hits the AA. In a decent visual, Horny hits an AA of his own allowing for the elimination by Cena.

Heath Slater is #25 and DEAR GOODNESS he looks hilarious in trunks. He might be as pale as Sheamus used to be and the visual is horrible. Horny hits some Sweet Shin Music and a Stunner followed by a double Five Knuckle Shuffle. There's a Tadpole Splash and Slater is gone. Cole sounds like he's about to be sick. Kofi Kingston is #26 and this should be interesting. Kofi fires off some kicks of course followed by some punches in the corner until Jack Swagger is #27.

Cole talks about the luck of #27 and Jerry correctly points out that the number is lucky in 30 man matches, not 40. Swagger hits the Vader Bomb on both full sized guys but as he goes after Hornswoggle, Kofi cross bodies Swagger down. There's the Boom Drop with horny as a stepping stone and it's King Sheamus at #28. Cena takes the Irish Curse and there's only Horny left to face Sheamus. Horny loads up Sweet Shin Music but Cena saves Horny from elimination. The tiny man loads up the Tadpole Splash but gets Brogue Kicked out, thank goodness.

Mysterio is #29 and he hits a pair of headscissors on Swagger and Sheamus but Sheamus breaks up the 619. Trouble in Paradise takes Sheamus down but Swagger takes Kofi down. Rey hits a headscissors to put Swagger on the apron and a 619 gets the elimination. Wade Barrett is #30 and it turns into a bunch of mini brawls. Winds of Change take Cena down and Zigler is #31. There's a pretty big talent pool in there at the moment with Cena, Mysterio, Sheamus, Kingston, Zigler and Barrett.

Barrett and Dolph go after Cena but Mysterio makes a save for no apparent reason. Diesel is the final big return at #32 and there's your big pop. This is the appearance that set up Diesel vs. HHH and Punk for the latter half of the year. Everyone is stunned but I think it's just at how black Diesel has gotten his hair. That's some high quality polish. We get a Diesel chant and he cleans house in a much more effective way than you would expect. Diesel's style is really good for something like this as he does so many basic moves but he's so big that they look that much more impressive.

Drew McIntyre is #33 and we get a LOUD let's go Diesel chant. Diesel gets caught in 619 position and in a very rare occurrence, the move gets booed. Alex Riley is #34 and Cole loses his mind when Miz's music hits again. Diesel misses a big boot and gets kicked out by Barrett. The DIESEL chant rocks the Garden as Miz sits in on commentary. Big Show is in at #35, so Striker talks about how much taller Show is than the tallest player in the NHL. For once I agree with Cole when he says "WHO CARES???" We know Big Show is tall, and simply telling us he's taller than a guy who is 6'9 doesn't change anything.

Show and Diesel have a staredown in the aisle which is a FAR better (and actual) illustration of how big Show is. McIntyre and Sheamus get dropped by Show and there's a chokeslam for Barrett. Show dumps Ziggler as Cena dumps Riley. Show shoves McIntyre out as Big Zeke is #36. He immediately throws out Show to a shockingly non-reaction. We have Barrett, Jackson, Kingston, Cena, Mysterio and Sheamus at the moment.

Santino is #37 and literally immediately breaks his record of 1 second in the Rumble. Jackson almost immediately decks him and knocks Santino to the mat and out to the floor which isn't an elimination. Remember that. Jackson tries to put Cena out and Del Rio is #38. He's still new at this point and hasn't gotten on almost everyone's nerves yet.

Striker tells us that Riley has been eliminated five minutes after it happens. Not only is he annoying but he's a bad broadcaster on top of that. Alberto wisely takes forever to get into the ring as Miz's voice sounds really hoarse. By long enough I mean Orton jumps him in the aisle at #39. There's a quick RK0 to Del Rio and one for Sheamus as well. A



third hits Kofi and he's gone. Sheamus is out too and it's time for Cena vs. Orton. John points to the sign but Kane's pyro goes off at #40 to complete the field and scare Cena to death.

So we've got Cena, Mystério, Barrett, Jackson, Del Rio, Orton and Kane in the ring. I've seen far worse. Kane focuses on Orton and hits the side slam, only to be run over by Big Zeke. Jackson misses a charge though and goes out via a low bridge. Mystério jumps into a chokeslam grip but Rey headscissors him out, only to be dumped by Barrett. Orton goes after Alberto while Cena beats up Barrett. Cena gets sent to the apron but gets back in via a shoulder to Wade's ribs.

Things slow down again and NOW we get Cena vs. Orton. The fans barely react to it though so Barrett breaks it up. There's an AA to Del Rio and here's Riley again. He distracts Cena enough to have Miz run in and dump Cena to get us down to Orton, Barrett and Del Rio in the ring. There's the backbreaker to Del Rio and Orton dumps Barrett, only to have Alberto sneak in on him to win the Rumble.

**Rating:** A. This was a VERY well done Rumble as they hit the three act structure and had a great balance of main event guys as well as new stars and legends. While it doesn't seem like a big shock now, Del Rio had only been around for about four months. This would be like a member of the Shield winning the Rumble in 2013. Excellent Rumble though and one of the best ever.

Del Rio celebrates.....AND SANTINO CRAWLS BACK IN! He went UNDER remember so the match isn't over yet. Del Rio doesn't see him coming and Santino hits the Cobra! Cole: "OH MY GOD!!!" He goes for the elimination but Del Rio reverses and dumps Santino out to really win. I remember watching this and my heart STOPPED as soon as Santino got back in. The exact words I said: "THEY WOULDN'T! THEY COULDN'T! Oh they didn't." This makes the match even better as the fans LOST IT when he got back in.

Ricardo is literally on the floor screaming Del Rio to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A. The worst and only bad match was the Divas and you have looks in that one so how can this be anything below great? 2011 was the start of the good period for WWE and they kicked it off with a bang

with a great Rumble here. This is an excellent show and well worth checking out. Good stuff here.

### Ratings Comparison

Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Miz vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: B

Eve Torres vs. Natalya vs. Layla vs. Michelle McCool

Original: D

Redo: D+

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

This is why I don't see the point in redoing the newer shows: my taste hasn't changed much.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/30/royal-rumble-2011-his-name-is-alberto-del-rio/>

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# Impact Wrestling – January 23, 2014: The Long Build To.....Something

## Impact Wrestling

Date: January 23, 2014

Location: Von Braun Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tazz

We're back with Genesis Week Two, featuring all of the matches that we couldn't get to last week because we needed a thirty minute opening segment. Tonight we have Roode vs. Angle in a cage, Gunner vs. Storm for the briefcase, Sabin vs. Aries for the X Title and Sting vs. Magnus in a contract vs. title match, even though Sting was forbidden from challenging for the title ever again just a year ago. Let's get to it.

The opening video recaps Sting challenging Magnus from last week and the Roode vs. Angle feud.

Dixie and Spud are in the back with Dixie freaking out about Ethan not being here. Magnus comes in and shakes hands with some lawyer whose name sounded like Creed. Apparently there was a meeting with the board of directors and someone is setting up a hostile takeover of TNA.

The attorney says he can deal with the new investor, even though it seems to be something personal. Magnus says deal with it because he has a title defense. Apparently the investor wants someone in Sting's corner so Magnus wants No DQ and No Countout. The lawyer and Magnus almost get in a fight until Dixie defuses it. The editing in this made it feel really unnatural.

Here are Magnus, Spud and Ethan to the arena. Nice to see that the "where's Ethan" problem was settled inside of four minutes. Magnus accuses Sting of playing politics and thought he was a bigger man than that. This brings out Sting himself who accuses Magnus of backing out of deals of his own. Magnus says this is about Sting and wants to know how much he paid the new investor.

Either way, Sting has to face Magnus on his own tonight and Sting just can't beat Magnus on his own. Sting says he's watched their BFG match over and over again and is ready. The fans chant Paper Champion at Magnus so he slaps Sting, triggering a brawl. Sting is outnumbered but Samoa Joe makes the save. Naturally Joe is the man in Sting's corner tonight.

Video on Gunner vs. Storm, leading to their match for the briefcase tonight.

Spud freaks out about Joe so Dixie puts him in a match with the Samoan. Spud panics even more. Dixie after Spud leaves: "Please don't get killed."

### James Storm vs. Gunner

Of course it's a briefcase on a pole. The announcers emphasize that you have to get full possession of the case. Feeling out process to start with Storm skinning the cat but walking into a running clothesline to put him back down. James comes back with a kick to the head but gets caught in the corner and taken down by a fallaway slam. A suplex puts Gunner down but he counters the Last Call into a Rock Bottom.

Gunner goes up but gets taken down by a hurricanrana of all things to put both guys down again. Storm goes up and gets his hands on the case but Gunner stops him, bringing the case down. That's not full possession though so it becomes a fight for the case. A headbutt knocks Storm away and Gunner gets the case at 5:40.

**Rating:** D+. This was every pole match you've ever seen though there were some decent spots in there to fill in some time. The ending didn't add anything special and Gunner still having the case doesn't change the situation. I don't buy Gunner as a title contender but beating James Storm won't hurt him. Can we get Storm a story that doesn't involve a tag team though?

Kurt Angle says if he can't beat Roode tonight, he doesn't deserve the Hall of Fame.

Earlier today, Velvet Sky got a package from Chris Sabin and we get to see her open it. The note says she needs to bring them to Impact this week. There's a teddy bear and a lead pipe, meaning Velvet isn't pleased.

#### X-Division Title: Chris Sabin vs. Austin Aries

Sabin is defending and Velvet is in a small cage at ringside, complete with a bag containing the gifts. Feeling out process to start until Aries grabs a quick Last Chancery. Sabin is thrown to the floor but jumps back onto the apron to crotch Aries in the corner. Aries gets caught in the Tree of Woe for a baseball slide but avoids being thrown to the floor.

He comes back with elbows to the head and a Lionsault for two. A discus forearm sets up the running dropkick in the corner but Sabin counters the brainbuster. Sabin heads to the floor and gets the bag from Velvet but it just has the bear. Aries gets in an ax handle from the apron followed by a missile dropkick. The brainbuster gives Aries the title at 5:10.

**Rating:** C-. I'm having a really hard time caring about these matches when I don't think all three have combined to go twenty minutes. These are all just meaningless title changes and the belt hasn't grown at all as a result. I believe this puts Aries at four title reigns and it doesn't make him a bigger star at all.

We get a strange promo from the Wolves with the camera going all over the place. Richards says you've seen their matches on Youtube so why would you make the wolves dance for their meal? They're the start of the new era and next week the investor will be revealed to the world. Cool video.

We recap Angle vs. Roode. Bobby has beaten him over and over but tonight it's in a cage and if Angle loses, he can never go into the Hall of Fame.

#### Kurt Angle vs. Bobby Roode

Roode has a new sleeveless full body vest. It's pin/submission/escape here. There's no bell after the break so we'll say this is joined in progress. Roode goes after Kurt to start but walks into a belly to belly suplex to give Angle control. He stomps Bobby down in the corner but his right hands are countered with a powerbomb into the cage. A suplex gets two for Roode and more choking ensues.

Angle grabs the legs and catapults Roode into the cage, setting up the Rolling Germans. The Angle Slam is countered and Angle is sent into the cage. A spinebuster gets a fast two for Roode but a Roode Bomb attempt is countered by Angle ramming Bobby into the cage. Now the Slam connects for two and there go the straps. Ankle lock goes on but Roode fights to his feet and takes Angle down with an enziguri.

We go old school with Roode's Northern Lariat (clothesline to the back of the head) for two. Roode goes sup but Angle makes a save and rams Roode into the cage over and over again until he falls down. Kurt is still on the ropes and goes to escape before looking back at Roode. Oh no. Angle busts out the moonsault but only hits mat in a HUGE crash. Roode crawls

out the door but Angle grabs the ankle to pull him back in. Kurt is kicked away so they do the same thing again but this time Kurt puts on the ankle lock, only to have Roode whip him into the cage.

The Roode Bomb gets two and Bobby climbs the cage, so Angle runs the corner and hits the Angle Slam to put both guys down again. Kurt crawls over for a slow two before making a very slow climb to the corner. He gets a leg over but Roode pulls him back in onto the top rope. They slug it out until Roode is crotched on the top, allowing Angle to climb out for the win at 14:17, seconds before Roode makes it out the door.

**Rating:** B. Angle is going to die in a wrestling ring at some point and there's no way around it. This was a good but not classic cage match and there's nothing wrong with that. Above all else, this match was given time to develop and it worked much better as a result. I'd buy this as the ending of the feud but there's a chance they could get one more match out of them.

Ethan gives Spud a pep talk and names him the British Dream.

Here are the Bro Mans who say they're on Team Dixie. Jesse says you only Bro once and asks the fans to tweet something right now to remember this moment. They say the word hashtag about 17 times and call out Eric Young and Joseph Park but just get the smaller one. He charges the ring and tries to fight everyone off but gets beaten down until Abyss makes the save. The monster cleans house and the champions and Zema run, leaving Eric to be grabbed by the throat but he talks Abyss out of it.

Joe is ready and wants a piece of Magnus afte Sting gets done with him.

Angle is worried about what happens if TNA loses Sting.

Rockstar Spud vs. Samoa Joe

This is exactly what you would expect with Joe not being afraid of Spud at all and hitting an early Facewash. Spud goes get in an eye rake and some kicks to the leg, only to charge into the release Rock Bottom out of the corner. The MuscleBuster and the Koquina Clutch are good for the win for Joe at 2:20.

#### TNA World Title: Magnus vs. Sting

No DQ and No Countout with Sting's contract (not career) on the line against Magnus' title. Joe is at ringside in Sting's corner. Magnus cranks on a headlock to start as the fans chant Paper Champion. Off to a wristlock by the Brit but Sting flips him down onto the mat and Magnus bails to the ropes. A double clothesline puts both guys down and here's Ethan to interfere but Joe blocks him on the ramp as we take a break.

Back with Sting putting on the Scorpion but Bad Influence comes out to neutralize Joe, allowing Ethan to make the save. Everyone is in the ring now so we're already at four interferences. Joe and Sting fight them off and Magnus takes the Death Drop but it's Zema and the Bro Mans for the save, getting us to seven interferences.

Bad Influence gets back into things but Angle makes a save (8), allowing Sting to superplex Magnus. A replacement referee comes out (9) and counts two but the Stinger Splash takes him out as well. There's the Scorpion but Bobby Roode (10) breaks up the hold to save a tapping Magnus. The champ gets up for a Michinoku Driver and it's Dixie bringing Earl Hebner (11 and 12) for the three count for the pin at 13:25. That one move put Sting out for about 45 seconds.

**Rating:** T. For twelve people that came out during the match. It's hard to get that many people into a show sometimes and they did it in a fourteen minute match. These things are making it hard to care about any main event TNA promotes because they're bigger messes than the Attitude Era ever dreamed of airing. This was more of a match than AJ vs. Magnus though.



Magnus rips up Sting's contract to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. For Impact, this wasn't bad but it keeps up one of TNA's many problems: they always seem to be building to something but we never actually get to that point. It's very much a company chasing its own tail and it has been for years. For instance, we spent months building to BFG but BFG was just a step towards Dixieland. Now Dixieland has bene just a step towards the investor, which will be a step to something else.

I'm sick of these power struggle stories and they keep TNA feeling like they're on life support. I'm mildly interested in the reveal next week but my hopes are low enough that a mouse couldn't get fit underneath them. The cage match was good but the main event was overdone, much like every other title match anymore.

### Results

Gunner b. James Storm – Gunner grabbed the briefcase

Austin Aries b. Chris Sabin – Brainbuster

Kurt Angle b. Bobby Roode – Angle escaped the cage

Samoa Joe b. Rockstar Spud – Koquina Clutch

Magnus b. Sting – Michinoku Driver

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# NXT – January 22, 2014: Run Neville Run

## NXT

Date: January 22, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Tensai

The main story coming out of last week is the live NXT special on February 27 which really is the closest thing to a pay per view that NXT has ever had. There are no matches announced for it yet but I can't imagine Dallas keeps the title coming out of that show. The question now is who challenges him on the special. Let's get to it.

Welcome Home.

The announcers intro the show. We've got a Championship Celebration for Bo Dallas tonight.

### Adrian Neville vs. Wesley Blake

Blake is a cowboy. The fans are WAY into Neville here. They fight over a wristlock to start until Neville spins around to escape. A headlock takes Blake to the mat and it's off to an armbar as they're still in first gear. Neville puts him down again with a springboard missile dropkick followed by a loud chop in the corner. Fans: ONE MORE TIME! Blake blocks it with a kick to the ribs and is immediately the most hated man in the arena. Neville comes back with kicks to the gut and head before the Red Arrow hits for the pin at 4:14.

**Rating:** C. Take a popular act and let him fly around for a few minutes. It's worked as a way to open the show for years and it still works now. Blake was as generic of a heel as you could ask for but there's something nice about seeing a 70s gimmick like EVIL cowboy being dragged out of

mothballs.

The BFF's brag about how awesome their lives are with Charlotte talking about riding in limos in jets. She doesn't care about Bayley either because life is vicious and you have to drop the nobodies. Charlotte is good as a heel, as if she could be anything else.

#### Xavier Woods vs. Alexander Rusev

Woods tries to speed things up to start but Rusev shrugs off a dropkick and hits Woods in the head with a forearm. He rains down some heavy right hands before a double stomp gets two. Xavier fights back with a kick to the ribs and a second dropkick followed by a Shining Wizard for two. Rusev hits a jumping kick to the chest of all things and the Accolade gets the submission at 2:40. Woods still does nothing for me.

Rusev keeps the hold on but Sin Cara of all people makes the save.

#### CJ Parker vs. Antonio Cesaro

Cesaro throws him around to start as the fans just don't care about Parker. CJ tries to speed things up but dives back first onto Cesaro's knees and we hit the chinlock with a knee in the back. Parker fights back with some knees to the chest in the corner and a high cross body for two before loading up an airplane spin. Cesaro isn't phased for some reason and does his own Swing before the Neutralizer gets the pin at 3:34.

**Rating:** D. People just do not care about Parker and it's time to pull the plug. He's generic in the ring and feels like he's playing a character instead of being natural at it whatsoever. Still though, Cesaro looks good and him shrugging off the 1972 offense was a very nice touch. The match sucked though.

Post match Sami Zayn comes out on crutches and says that 2013 was the best year of his career. However he's been thinking about one match in particular (fans: "MATCH OF THE YEAR!") because it's the one blemish on his record. Sami wants a rematch but Cesaro walks up the ramp and says no to his face.

Miz is in the back and calls Full Sail awesome. He's feeling saucy

tonight so maybe we should have a MizTV tonight. CJ Parker comes in and wants to know why the people keep booing him. Miz says he can see why and accuses Parker of disrespecting him. Parker says Miz is leaving a toxic footprint by spewing all that toxic waste before slapping Miz in the face. Hopefully this is the start of a turn for Parker.

### Natalya vs. Summer Rae

Bayley and the BFF's are seconds here and Renee Young is on commentary. Feeling out process to start with Natalya taking over using some technical stuff. She can't get a backslide though but a snapmare allows her to step on a seated Rae's back, sending Summer face first into the mat.

A running seated dropkick gets two but Summer goes after the legs and puts them in a modified Indian Deathlock, only to have Natalya reverse it into a hold of her own. Summer is sent to the floor for a second before Natalya brings her back in for some hard clotheslines and forearms. Summer's spinwheel kick is caught and the Sharpshooter makes her tap at 2:54.

Colin Cassady and Enzo Amore (still in a wheelchair but complete with leopard print seat cover) say Enzo is making a full recovery with Enzo saying he'll fly. Aiden English comes in and brags about beating Cassady over and over. Cassady points out the cheating so English offers to sing. Enzo runs over Aiden's foot.

Time for Bo's celebration for being a record setting 224 day long title reign. He broke the record nearly three months ago but why not have a celebration now? Bo thanks us for such a great ovation and says we're here for an historic moment. He cherishes our cheers, especially when we say LET'S GO BO. Tonight the NXT officials are going to celebrate the longest reigning NXT Champion of all time, and that's not Rollins or Langston.

Bo, with the best over the top grin ever, accepts the honor and thanks some friends in the audience: his third cousin Charles, his sister's college roommate, and his fourth grade teacher. We get a banner raised which looks like it's computer generated. Bo celebrates his here's Adrian

Neville to protest. He's here to speak for everyone when he says shut up. The fans say Bo is a wanker as Adrian says he's going to win the title.

Bo laughs by saying Adrian got a title match before by beating someone in 4:45. Dallas could easily beat Neville in less than 4:45. HHH pops up on screen and says that Bo is going to get a chance to make him a Bo-Liever. Right now, there's going to be a match with a 4:45 time limit. If Bo can't win, then Neville gets his rematch at the live show on February 27.

### Bo Dallas vs. Adrian Neville

Dallas is in street clothes. Neville avoids a charge and points at the clock before hiptossing Bo down and out to the floor. Bo pulls him outside as well and we're under four minutes. Adrian gets on the apron but Dallas pulls the ring skirt to take Neville down. The referee gets to nine and more time is burned off the clock. Dallas pounds away with three minutes left and gets two off a suplex.

Some elbows rock Neville in the corner and a slam gets two with two minutes to go. Dallas wastes a lot of time by driving some shoulders into Neville, only to have Adrian come back with kicks to the thigh and a forearm. A dropkick puts Dallas down with forty five seconds on the clock. The Red Arrow is loaded up but Bo rolls outside. Neville stands on the top rope and looks at the clock. Bo comes back in with fifteen seconds left but gets backdropped to the floor as time expires at 4:45.

**Rating:** D. This was an angle instead of a match. I'm glad Bo didn't lose, but at the same time I'm not wild on having Neville get the title shot by just surviving a quick beating and then running away for a minute and a half. The match will be good when they get the time to actually wrestle.

Bo comes back in post match and misses a charge, setting up a Red Arrow to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Not one of their better efforts tonight but at least they've set up some interesting stuff for the future. The good thing about NXT is that they can change things up next week and not have to deal with these guys again for another week. Hopefully they don't spend the next month building up to the live show like WWE does every few

weeks.

### Results

Adrian Neville b. Wesley Blake – Red Arrow

Alexander Rusev b. Xavier Woods – Accolade

Antonio Cesaro b. CJ Parker – Neutralizer

Natalya b. Summer Rae – Sharpshooter

Adrian Neville vs. Bo Dallas went to a time limit draw

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## Hulkamania Turns 30

Thirty years ago today, Hulk Hogan defeated the Iron Sheik to win the WWF Title for the first time. This is the birth of modern wrestling as Hogan changed everything about the business with one legdrop and never looked back. Here's the entire show, which oddly enough didn't have the title match go last.

### WWF House Show

Date: January 23, 1984

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City New York

Attendance: 26,292

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Pat Patterson

I don't have the proper words to explain what this show means to

wrestling. It's the night that changed everything and gave birth to modern wrestling. Here, we have the new WWF World Champion the Iron Sheik defending against the breakout star of Rocky III, Hulk Hogan. Obviously everyone knows the ending to this (they should as the match has been included on at least eight WWF tapes/DVDs) and it's one of the matches everyone should see at least once. Let's get to it.

#### Jose Luis Rivera vs. Tony Garea

Feeling out process to start as I think this is face vs. face here. Garea works on the arm to start and they hit the mat for a bit. Both guys trade headscissors and head locks to control with Rivera finally controlling. Tony gets a quick cross body for two before hooking an armbar to slow things down again. Jose tries to fight out and even slams Tony but can't break the armbar.

Rivera grabs a quick two off a rollup and they circle each other a bit more. Somehow we're still feeling each other out after five minutes. There's nothing going on so we look at a replay of the rollup. Rivera kind of messes up a backdrop then tries a dropkick as Garea tries a backdrop. Since things like dropkicks and backdrops are too complex, it's back to the armbars. Out of nowhere, Rivera tries a spinning cross body out of the corner but Garea rolls through and gets a kind of fast count for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. Technically this was fine but that doesn't make it a good match. Garea was one of those guys that was always around and was mainly a tag team guy but he would get a good reaction when he was out there. Rivera on the other hand was never all that interesting and was probably just there because he was Puerto Rican. Not much to see here.

#### Invaders vs. Mr. Fuji/Tiger Chung Lee

The Invaders are masked guy and one of them murdered Bruiser Brody. One of the Invaders is taller so we'll call him #1. The official Invader #1 is the guy so it's hard not to boo him. Lee and #2 start things off...but Gorilla is calling him #1. Oh wait he's the taller one. Great now they're making rapid fire tags (#2 barely gets over the ropes without tripping) and Chung's arm gets beaten on over and over.

Monsoon says #2 is in there now so good enough. Anyway he stays on the arm and it's off to Fuji for the first time. #2 blocks a chop and hits Fuji in the ribs before cranking on the arm a bit. #1 randomly jumps in and out of the ring to distract the referee. As he's doing this, #2 doesn't move an inch. A cross body gets two for #2 and it's back to the arm. Fuji looks ticked off.

Back to #1 for some arm cranking on Lee who finally hits a slam...and is promptly kicked in the face. It's back to the armbar by #2 and here's #1 again. Lee shoves #1 into the corner for some choking from Fuji with a tag rope and it's officially off to Mr. It's quickly back to Lee to crank on #1's arm and hit a backdrop for two. Fuji gets a suplex of his own for no cover. #1 comes back with a suplex of his own followed by slamming Fuji off the top, allowing for the hot tag to #2.

Lee comes in as well and things speed WAY up. Gorilla calls #2 by his real name (Johnny Rivera) just before Lee hits a Saito Suplex for two. Back to Fuji who suplexes #2 and chops him down before bringing Tiger back in. We hit the bearhug and Gorilla says to bite him in the ear or poke him in the eye to escape. Monsoon was EVIL at times. Back to the bearhug and #1 breaks the hold up, only to have Fuji switch sans tag.

Fuji hooks the ultra lame back claw as Gorilla talks about having a bunch of bananas thrown at him. Now he talks about which camera we're looking through to fill in time. #2 crawls around to the corner (could it be because it was just a freaking hand on his side?) and makes the hot tag to #1 to face Lee...and they lock up. So much for the burst of speed. A spinning cross body out of the corner is caught in an atomic drop from Lee to get us to heat segment #3.

We hit the chinlock as this is clearly going to the time limit draw. Fuji comes in for some double choking (I miss stuff like that. It's so basic but it works so easily) before another illegal switch. #1 misses a splash which gives Lee two but he allows the tag to #2. We get some leg work as the Invaders rapidly tag in and out again. They take turns cannonballing down onto the leg but Lee escapes a spinning toe hold. #2 blocks the tag though and we get a leg lock.



Fuji comes in and gets his own leg worked on for good measure. Off to an abdominal stretch (Gorilla complains like a broken record) on Fuji followed by one on a charging Lee. Fuji breaks it up so here's #2 who is WAY too small to hook an abdominal stretch on Lee but he does it anyway. Everything breaks down and the Invaders hook a Rowboat (stupid double leglock) as the bell rings for the time limit.

**Rating:** D+. This wasn't the worst match in the world but after about ten minutes it was clear what we were going to. It didn't help that a lot of the match was spent going slowly so they could fill in time. This was a much more common occurrence back in the day as well as you would get a draw on almost every show.

#### Masked Superstar vs. Chief Jay Strongbow

Strongbow is a relic of the past and Masked Superstar would become more famous as Ax of Demolition. Gorilla calls this a main event in any arena in the country, other than this one I guess. They shove each other around to start and man alive does Strongbow look old. Patterson seems to have disappeared. Jay runs the Superstar over and puts on a headlock. Pat is back now and thinks Strongbow will try to take off the mask.

They get back up and Masked Superstar runs into the corner to hide. Back to the headlock as this match doesn't seem interested in going anywhere. Strongbow goes for the mask and we head to the floor. Back in and Strongbow goes on the warpath and fires off some knees to Superstar's head. He can't get the mask off though and Masked comes back with shots in the corner. It's warpath time again and Strongbow hits a bunch of chops and his sleeper but Superstar comes back with a single clothesline for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. The match was boring but the crowd carried it by being so into Strongbow. Sometimes just a simple gimmick like being an Indian along with the longevity that Jay had (he was in his mid 50s here) were all that you needed. The match itself was pretty dull but Strongbow was trying at least. Shockingly not horrible here.

#### Ivan Putski vs. Sgt. Slaughter

We get the shot from the back as Sarge comes out. I miss that camera shot. I think Slaughter is a heel here but he seems rather popular anyway. Putski, who might be 5'8 in heels, starts firing off punches but Sarge bails to the corner. They circle each other a bit more with no contact yet. Putski is small but he is RIPPED (and pretty clearly full of steroids). They finally collide with Putski shoving him around and slamming the Sarge down to stall some more.

Ivan hooks a headlock as Patterson talks about Putski loving to drink and sing. Back to the headlock as this is going slowly again. Slaughter finally comes out with an atomic drop and works on the back for a bit. That doesn't last long though as Slaughter gets rammed into the top turnbuckle and may have been busted open in the process. Slaughter gets sent shoulder first into the post as Patterson says to stay on top of him. Is that what he got to do after the Alley Fight?

Slaughter reverses a whip into the corner and comes back with the Slaughter Cannon (running clothesline) to take over but he can't slam Putski. Ivan is billed at 225lbs and Slaughter can't slam him? The Cannon misses and Putski comes back with the Polish Hammer (double ax to the chest) and a shoulder to send Slaughter to the floor. In a funny bit, Sarge's chin gets caught on the bottom rope to keep him from hitting the concrete. They fight on the apron and Putski knocks Slaughter back inside, which lets Slaughter beat the count and win by countout.

**Rating:** D. Another dull match here as is the custom for 1984. Putski just wasn't that good and he looked freaky to say the least. He was just too muscular for someone his size and it never quite worked. Slaughter would go to the AWA pretty soon after this and stay for years until coming back around 1990 to be the turncoat American.

Gorilla sends it to the back for an interview with Paul Orndorff, including a rare error by slipping up on Paul's name. After that bad mistake. Paul says that Salvatore Bellomo is nothing more than a spaghetti eater to him.

#### Paul Orndorff vs. Salvatore Bellomo

Paul has Roddy Piper with him and this is Orndorff's MSG debut. This is

also Piper's return to MSG after being in the NWA for about five years. We stall to start a lot, allowing Patterson to get in another line that is only funny when he says it: "If Orndorff turned his back to me like that, I would be all over him." Now Orndorff and Piper complain about Sal's knee brace. The heels threaten to leave as Pat says he'd like to get in the ring with Orndorff to see if he liked him.

Now Paul complains about not having his own corner. He finally gets back in so Piper can disrobe him. Wait actually he just unties it and the disrobing takes place on the floor. The bell rang about four minutes ago so this is just stalling. Piper distracts Sal and the attack is on fast. The squashing begins and Piper is immediately talking trash. Orndorff stomps away and chokes on the rope before getting two off a backdrop. Piper to the referee: "COUNT FASTER!" Sal falls on Paul in a slam attempt for two. Piper: "NOT SO FAST!"

Orndorff misses a charge into the post and rams his shoulder, allowing Bellomo to make his required comeback. A dropkick hits Orndorff and Paul misses an elbow drop. Bellomo puts on a wristlock but Paul gets in a knee to the ribs to stop the momentum. Sal grabs the arm again immediately and cranks away, even surviving an armdrag attempt from Paul. Bellomo adds a headscissors as the match keeps going. Orndorff finally suplexes his way out of the hold and Sal heads to the floor.

Piper yells at Bellomo as only he can before Orndorff slams Sal on the floor. Back in and Paul hits a perfect suplex for two and Roddy can't handle many more of these kickouts. Orndorff chokes away in the corner a bit, much to the anger of the "bite his ear or poke him in the eye" dude. Orndorff goes up but misses a top rope knee drop and gets beaten on for a bit. A powerslam stops Bellomo dead and a great piledriver ends this clean.

**Rating:** C-. It depends on how you look at this one. Bellomo stayed in there too long, but at the same time it made Orndorff look like a killer which is the right idea here. That piledriver looked GREAT and Orndorff was clearly going to be something special. Fourteen minutes is too long of a match though, especially for an MSG debut like this.

Bellomo takes forever to get out of the ring to make the beating look even better. Good stuff.

#### Intercontinental Title: Don Muraco vs. Tito Santana

Tito is challenging and Muraco has Albano with him. Feeling out process to start with Albano wondering around the ring for no apparent reason other than he's Lou Albano. Tito finally takes over with a headlock before firing off some of those right hands that Jesse would say have guacamole on them. When the headlock stops working, Tito just rams Muraco's head into the mat. Why over complicate things?

Back to the headlock as Tito cranks away. A big knee drop to Muraco's head gets two and it's back to the headlock. Don comes out of the hold with a backbreaker but is immediately slammed right back down into the headlock. This is getting rather repetitive as we're over eleven minutes into this match and about nine of them have been spent in a headlock. They changes things up slightly by having Tito on his feet where Muraco can break the hold with a kind of Russian legsweep.

Muraco rams Santana's head into the buckle to take over and adds in a powerslam for two. I'm pretty sure Muraco's finisher at this point was a tombstone but I'm not sure. The fans cheer for Tito and he starts to Hulk Up a bit. Santana punches Muraco down and stomps away before having to take Albano out. The forearm misses Don though and both guys are down. Muraco goes up top and they slug it out...for a double DQ? Dang this is an old school match. Even Gorilla sounds confused by that.

**Rating:** D. I LOVE Tito Santana, but man alive this was boring. It's a sixteen minute match and nearly thirteen minutes of that are spent in a headlock. That isn't an exaggeration either. I checked to see if I had forgotten something but there's nothing else there. Tito would win the title from Muraco about three weeks later in Boston.

Tito swears he can beat Muraco and claims he got ripped off. Albano had no business being in the ring.

#### Haiti Kid/Tiger Jackson vs. Dana Carpenter/Pancho Boy

Midget match with 2/3 falls here. Kid and Tiger are incredibly small and probably half a foot shorter each than the villains. Tiger Jackson would go on to become Doink's partner Dink. Carpenter is almost as tall as the referee. Pancho gets pantsed by Tiger and we're ready to go. Carpenter and Jackson start things off but Dana immediately brings in Pancho. Tiger hooks a headlock so Boy tries to grab his hair, forgetting that Steve Austin has more hair on his head than Jackson does.

Pancho slaps Jackson in the head a bit before getting elbowed in the ribs. Jackson takes him down with a flying headscissors and holds him on the mat for a bit. I think Pancho might have portrayed Queasy of Jerry Lawler's team at the 94 Survivor Series but that's just a guess. Pancho fights up and literally spins Jackson around on the top of his bald head.

Haiti comes in with some dropkicks to clean house. Carpenter comes in and gets beaten up too as this is your usual midget match. Haiti dropkicks Dana to the floor before putting him in a full nelson. We get some heel miscommunication resulting in Pancho hitting Carpenter by mistake. Back to Pancho vs. Tiger as this keeps going. They keep going until Jackson hits a middle rope sunset flip for the first fall.

The third fall begins with Haiti vs. Pancho, because if there's one thing better than a midget match, it's a two out of three falls midget match! Haiti Kid is black, so therefore his head is immune to being rammed into buckles. Kid can't suplex Carpenter and the referee gets dogpiled. We get a crisscross and Kid hooks an airplane spin on Carpenter. We get a weird ending as Haiti covers Carpenter and the referee is REALLY hesitant to count the pin, as in that wasn't the correct finish.

**Rating:** D. I hate these things. They're not interesting because there are no stories to them and the matches are always based around unfunny comedy. I guess the live crowd likes them or something, because I don't care about these things at all. Nothing to see here other than the same shenanigans you see everywhere.

Freddie Blassie is annoyed that Hogan has been swapped in for Bob Backlund and says the cheating isn't going to work. Sheik speaks I'm assuming Arabic and rants about Hogan before switching to English and

getting cut off. Why? Because this is pre-taped and Sheik and Blassie are in the ring.

### WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Iron Sheik

This is it. This is the match that changes EVERYTHING. Sheik beat Backlund like a month earlier and Backlund is too injured to get his rematch here, so Hulk gets the shot instead. The place goes NUTS for Hogan's entrance for the first of many occasions. This is Hogan's return to the Garden after about three years. After being bored all night, the place is going nuts just from hearing "From Venice Beach, California."

The bell rings and Hogan CHARGES at him in the corner before Sheik can even get his robe off. A clothesline with the robe takes down the champion and it's all Hulk so far. Another big clothesline puts Sheik down before Hulk easily picks him up for a choke. Hulk, ever the hero, spits on Sheik to a huge ovation. Big boot gets two so Hulk hits a pair of elbows for two. Hulk FINALLY screws up by missing a running elbow in the corner and Sheik takes over.

The champion stomps away with those curled boots of his. I guess it's a Middle East thing. A backbreaker puts Hogan down but he easily powers out at one. Off to a Boston Crab but Hulk powers out after about ten seconds. Sheik can't get anything going here long term. A gutwrench suplex gets two for Sheik and (with an infamous erection for some reason) puts on the camel clutch that won the title. Hulk casually wags his fingers no and he powers out of the hold in less than thirty seconds. Hogan picks Sheik up, rams him into the buckle, drops the big leg, and as Gorilla puts it, Hulkamania is here.

**Rating:** A+. This was exactly what it was supposed to be as Hogan squashed Sheik here, basically selling nothing and escaping Sheik's best move before beating him in less than six minutes. Look at this card: even the opener was a minute longer than this match. Hogan DOMINATED the champion here and left no doubt about who was better. After this, everything became about flash than substance, and for people who complain about it, let it go already. The change is over and it's never going back. Absolutely perfect here.

Sheik refuses to go out on a stretcher and charges at Hogan again, only to get beaten down one more time.

Hogan celebrates in the back and Andre pops up to pour champagne over him. This would be used in the Mania III hype package. It's still the big green belt too which was ugly as sin. Rocky Johnson and Ivan Putski come in to celebrate too.

We've still got two matches to go. I never got why that was the case.

#### Rene Goulet vs. Jimmy Snuka

Goulet jumps Snuka to start and does some what appears to be biting. A back elbow puts Snuka down and a slam gets two. The very popular Snuka comes back with a hip toss and Goulet hides in the corner. Rene puts on a front facelock but Snuka elbows him down and wins with a top rope cross body.

**Rating:** D+. Snuka is always fun to watch and this was just a quick match to fill in time before the end of the show. No one bought Snuka as being in trouble at all and there was no reason to. He was INSANELY over at this point, probably the second biggest star in the company other than maybe Andre.

Hogan's parents celebrate with him in the back.

#### Andre the Giant/Rocky Johnson/Tony Atlas vs. Wild Samoans

It's Afa/Sika/Samula here who would become Samu in the 90s. Johnson and Atlas are tag champions, having beaten the Samoans about two months prior. I think that's Samula and Atlas to start things off as we're just waiting on Andre to come in and destroy people. Rocky comes in instead and we get a crisscross. Rocky stops and allows Samula to keep running in a funny bit.

Johnson ducks an attack in the corner and causes some heel miscommunication before it's back to Tony. Atlas EASILY breaks a full nelson and sends Samula into a shot from Andre. Here's the big guy (I mean the biggest of the big guys) but Samula blocks a backdrop with a headbutt. Two Samoans headbutt him down and it's Sika the legal man. The

headbutts are no sold now and Andre is starting to have fun. Andre drops Sika with a headbutt and sits on his chest for a pin.

**Rating:** D+. This was as simple as it sounds. I don't think Afa ever got in there as this didn't even last five minutes. Andre and the Soul Patrol were popular guys and it was a fun way to send the crowd home happy. Good stuff here and a good way to end the show which wasn't exactly hot so far.

Patterson and Monsoon wrap things up.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This was a hard one to sit through. 1983 wasn't the best time for the company as far as in ring stuff went and you could see a lot of the less interesting stuff going on here still. Hogan winning the title here of course changes everything though and is the only reason to watch it. You can literally find it on at least 8 tapes or DVDs and it's all over Youtube. Not a good show, but to say it's historic is a huge understatement.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Summerslam at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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## 2013 Wrestling Observer Newsletter Awards Announced

Dave Meltzer's WON Awards are out so it's time to see how much he loves Japan this year. I'll include my winners as well and my thoughts on his, though keep in mind I don't watch puro and I'm only a casual MMA fan at best. Also before I start, I'm well aware that Meltzer's readers vote on this, but if you believe the majority of them do anything but repeat what



he says, you're more delusional than I can help.

Wrestler of the Year – Hiroshi Tanahashi (John Cena/Daniel Bryan)

Everyone says it's Bryan or Cena, Meltzer picks the top Japanese guy. Is anyone surprised by this?

Most Valuable MMA Fighter – Georges St. Pierre

I'll take his word for it.

Most Outstanding Wrestler – Hiroshi Tanahashi

I'm still not sure how this is different from Wrestler of the Year

Best Box Office Draw – Georges St. Pierre

Next.

Feud of the Year – Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Kazuchika Okada (Rhodes Family vs. Authority)

I've heard good things about this feud but I saw their match from the January 4 show and wasn't blown away.

Tag Team of the Year – Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns (Shield)

I lump tag teams and groups together so no arguments here.

Most Improved – Roman Reigns (Bo Dallas)

Reigns was a popular pick but he was more along the lines of "guy who

gets more focus". I get the pick though.

Best Interviews – Paul Heyman

Why don't I do one of these? Heyman is fine.

Most Charismatic – Hiroshi Tanahashi

Just name the awards after him already.

Best Technical Wrestler – Daniel Bryan

Even though he mainly uses strikes now?

Best Brawler – Katsuyori Shibata

Yeah whatever.

Best Flying Wrestler – Kota Ibushi

I was impressed by what I saw of him so why not.

Most Underrated – Antonio Cesaro

I'm fine with that as he deserves a far bigger push.

Promotion of the Year – New Japan

I'm as shocked as you are.

Best Weekly TV Show – NXT

Amen.

Most Outstanding Fighter – Cain Velasquez

No argument there I suppose.

Match of the Year – Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Kazuchika Okada, April 7 (CM Punk vs. Brock Lesnar)

Again, bow down to Japan.

Fight of the Year – Gilbert Melendez vs. Diego Sanchez

I heard good things so sure.

Rookie of the Year – Yohei Komatsu (Big E. Langston)

I'd love to know how many voters have seen more than one match from most of these guys. It would be an interesting result.

Non-Wrestler of the Year – Paul Heyman (Paul Heyman)

Yeah.

TV Announcer of the Year – William Regal

Fine again.

Major Wrestling Show of the Year – New Japan G-1 Day 4

Lather, rinse, repeat.

Best Maneuver of the Year – Okada's Rainmaker

It's a clothesline. Seriously, it's a clothesline.

Best Booker – Jedo/Gedo, New Japan

Next.

Promoter of the Year – Dana White, UFC

Be careful. New Japan might not want to spoon after.

Gimmick of the Year – Wyatt Family

For the sheep mask alone.

Best Book – Mad Dogs, Midgets and Screwjobs – Pat LaParade and Bertrand Herbert

Never heard of it but it sounds interesting.

Best DVD – Jim Crocket Promotions: The Good Old Days

Heard of it, looks interesting.

Most Overrated – Randy Orton

So not only does Japan win, but it's time to rip America.

Worst TV Announcer – Taz

Ok I'll give him that one.

Worst Major Show – Battleground (Battleground)

Two in a row.

Most Disgusting Promotional Tactic – Exploiting Paul Bearer's Death

I can get why people wouldn't like it.

Worst TV Show – Impact

I'd go with Smackdown due to it not needing to exist but Impact was awful.

Worst match of the Year – 10 Diva tag, November 24 (Same)

No argument there.

Worst Feud – Big Show vs. Authority

No arguments there unless you want to go with the Divas, which I think I would have.

Worst Promotion – TNA

Again no arguments.

Worst Gimmick – Aces and 8's

They were a gimmick still?

Interestingly enough, no ROH wins at all. As usual, New Japan is the

amazing company that about 18 people in America actually while thousands claim they do and Meltzer continues to ignore WWE, which I'm sure has nothing to do with them firing him back in 1987. I mean, clearly Savage vs. Steamboat was only 4.25 stars, right Dave?

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Summerslam at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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## Wrestler of the Day – January 20: Pat Patterson

Next up we have Pat Patterson, who has a nice variety of stuff.

I was hoping to talk about his match from Rio to win the Intercontinental Title but my copy of the tape doesn't work. Instead here's a match from Australia in 1968 against Antonio Pugliesi, who was often billed as Bruno Sammartino's cousin.

### Antonio Pugliesi vs. Pat Patterson

It's a crisscross to start until Patterson is armdragged down a few times. Pat is the heel here I believe and stalls on the floor to prove me right. Back in and Patterson grabs a headlock but is shoved to the apron for more stalling. Patterson heads back inside and immediately runs from a charging Pugliese. They slug it out in the ring with Antonio slamming Patterson down and putting on a chinlock. Back up and Antonio hooks something that might be a relative of a hurricanrana and since this is 1968 in Australia, the fans are in awe.

We go back to normal for this era with an armbar on Patterson who pulls

at the hair in a failed escaped attempt. The hold lasts nearly two minutes before Patterson fights up, only to be armdragged back into the armbar. Back up again and they trade dropkicks, only to have Patterson get caught in armbar #3. Pat fights to his feet and sends Antonio into the ropes they ram heads to put both guys down. Patterson misses a splash but avoids an elbow drop to keep both guys down again.

Antonio is sent to the floor and punches in the head a few times before dragging him back in for some ramming into the buckle. They slug it out from their knees until Antonio slugs Patterson out to the floor. He kicks Pat in the head and Patterson uses the breather to pull out a foreign object. A shot to the head has Antonio in trouble but the time runs out before we get a pin.

**Rating:** C-. The match wasn't bad but the armbars make it clear that they were killing time until we got to the draw. Patterson was such a natural heel that he could have the fans ready to kill him like it was nothing. This match would be filed under "it was a very different era", even though the stuff was similar to what you would see today.

It was off to the WWF for Patterson where he would get a world title shot on September 24, 1979 in a cage against Bob Backlund.

WWFTitle: BobBacklundvs. PatPatterson

This is from September of 79 apparently. Patterson is the IC Champion here and is a cage match expert but Backlund has never been in one. Patterson was more or less the top heel in the company by default here. They start off fast as Backlund is all fired up here. Patterson tries to get out early and that goes nowhere.

Both guys get incredibly close but can't get all the way out. Patterson almost gets out with Backlund literally dragging him back over the top by a single leg. They keep fighting to try to get out as this is definitely more about winning than violence which is fine. We clip the match to them being on the mat and Patterson hammers away on a cut on Backlund's head. From what I can find only about three minutes out of 16 total

were clipped so we get the vast majority here.

Patterson is busted too. Vince calls the WWF Champion a gallant lad. That's sweet. Patterson goes into the cage and Backlund goes for the kill. He winds up going into the cage though so forget about that I guess. Backlund gets the atomic drop which was one of his signature moves at the time. I guess Lombardi will have to be gentle tonight.

Patterson finds some brass knuckles and they go up. Pat can't get a shot with them and both guys go down. And then Backlund kicks Patterson in the head and the force of the kick launches Backlund backwards through the cage door and out to the floor. Patterson FREAKS in the ring after that even though he did nothing but lose cleanly. I guess that's why he's a heel.

**Rating:** B. Very solid match here with both guys beating the tar out of each other. Backlund was at this best at the end of a feud where he had to go off to beat someone and that's what he did here. This was either their fourth or fifth match against each other and Patterson had beaten him before. This was fun stuff though and it worked very well.

Patterson is of course most famous for being the first Intercontinental Champion so here's a title defense from January 21, 1980.

Intercontinental Title: Pat Patterson vs. Lou Albano

Patterson goes right after him to start and Lou bails. He stays gone far longer than a ten count but is allowed back in anyway. Albano kicks Patterson in the knees and tries a foreign object which is taken away. Patterson scoops the leg and starts choking away. He chokes with some tape and Albano hits the floor. Back in Lou gets in a shot with the object but Patterson pounds him down again. Albano walks out and takes the countout.

**Rating:** D. This was just for fun as Patterson was still very popular and Albano was only an occasional wrestler. There wasn't much to it and that's just fine as it got the fans fired up despite there being like 15



minutes left in the show counting another break. Patterson is a guy who isn't remembered as well as he should be.

This brings us to Patterson's most famous match in the WWF: the Alley Fight against Sgt. Slaughter on May 4, 1981 in Madison Square Garden. These two had feuded for months and months and it's time to blow it off in Meltzer's match of the year for 1981.

### Pat Patterson vs. Sgt. Slaughter

Patterson is in street clothes and the brawl is on as soon as Slaughter gets inside. A series of kicks puts Sarge down and Patterson chokes him in the corner. Slaughter misses a big right hand and hits the post, sending him to the apron. Back in and it's time for a whipping from Patterson with Slaughter selling it like he's been shot. Slaughter finally sends him through the ropes and onto the apron to get a breather but Pat is right back with belt shots to the back.

Sarge finally gets in a blow to the ribs and takes the belt before sending Patterson throat first into the top rope. He wraps the belt across Pat's mouth and rips Patterson's shirt off for good measure. More choking ensues but Pat charges at the ropes to send Slaughter out to the floor. Slaughter tries to come back in off the top but only hits the mat to put both guys down.

Patterson slams him down and drops a middle rope knee before hitting the same sequence again. He bites Slaughter's forehead but Sarge kicks him in the gut and drops a few knees of his own to take over again. A kick to the head with the combat boot puts Patterson down again and Slaughter launches him to the floor. Back in and Pat punches at the ribs before catapulting Slaughter into the post, causing his forehead to burst open. It looks like he was stabbed to draw that much blood.

Pat goes after the cut but a low blow puts him back down. Slaughter pulls out brass knuckles but can't see Pat after knocking him out. His face looks like Ultimate Warrior's paint job. Patterson is back up and wins a slugout before hitting him in the head with a cowboy boot. Slaughter still has the knuckles on his hand. Another boot shot has Slaughter reeling and a third puts him down. Sarge is knocked into the post and

onto the floor where he takes out a cameraman. The crowd is LOVING this. Pat just unloads with the boot until the Grand Wizard (Slaughter's manager) throws in a towel to stop it. Sarge wanted to keep fighting.

**Rating:** A. Great great fight here with Slaughter's blade job being one for the books. This was as brutal as you're going to get for this era and the fans ate it up. One of the key things here is that Slaughter got to save face at the end with the Wizard throwing in the towel to stop it. Patterson rose up to fight the evil guy, which is what a hero is supposed to do. Great stuff here.

After that war, we're going to do some goofy stuff for the rest of the day. First up is from the May 10, 1999 episode of Monday Night Raw when Patterson teamed up with Gerald Brisco to face the Mean Street Posse in a loser leaves the WWF match. This is old school vs. new school and respect vs. young punks and couldn't be more fun.

#### The Stooges vs. Mean Street Posse

It's Rodney and Pete Gas here. The Stooges come out to Real American and rip off their black shirts to reveal a Brisco Brothers Body Shop shirt and an IC Champ in Rio de Janeiro shirt. Both guys are in riot gear helmets as the fans aren't sure what to make of this. Patterson is taken down on the floor but Brisco comes back with amateur stuff on the punks.

Lawler and Ross keep saying BROTHER to keep up the joke. A double clothesline puts Brisco down but Patterson saves him from a belt whipping. Brisco comes back with a suplex on Pete as Patterson crotches Rodney. Gerald hooks a Figure Four and Patterson puts on a Boston crab to wake the crowd up for the double submission to get rid of the Posse.

**Rating:** A+. Seriously, this is just fun.

Pat takes off his shirt to do the Hogan poses. JR gets the infamous line of "AND HE'S SINGLE FELLAS!"

We'll close it out with a very disturbing match: Pat Patterson defending his Hardcore Title against Gerald Brisco in an evening gown match. Just go with it.

## Hardcore Title: Pat Patterson vs. Gerald Brisco

This is the result of a weeks long story of Brisco pinning a sleeping Crash Holly for the title, only to have Patterson pour champagne in his eyes and blast him in the head with a bottle to steal the title. Pat wanted to keep the title so he dressed in drag to hide in the women's locker room. Brisco found out and did the same to chase Patterson because....well because he's a Stooge.

Brisco comes out with a 2x4 while Patterson has a stuffed dress, a big blonde wig and a shopping cart full of pillows and teddy bears. Pat grabs the mic and says they're friends and should Gerald should just take the title to save their friendship. Gerald goes for it but gets hit low and spanked, revealing pantyhose. Patterson shoves a banana in his face and stomps the wig off Gerald's head.

A Stinkface is blocked with a low blow as the fans are booing this out of the building. Brisco sends him into the corner for a bronco buster and chokes him with a blonde wig. We see bras from both guys until Crash comes in and beats up both guys, including a trashcan shot to Patterson for the pin and the title. This was named worst match of the year and I can't say I disagree. They fight up the aisle and indeed, Brisco is wearing a thong.

**Rating:** Y. As in yeah....moving on.

Pat Patterson is a guy who didn't have the best skill set but he knew how to work a crowd like few others. That's in the same vein as Jerry Lawler and you can see how long of a career those two have had. A lot of Patterson's best work was in the territories so unfortunately we can't see most of it. What we got though was good and it's clear that he had a lot of talent. Check out some of his stuff online if you can as he's worth a look for an education in making the most of what you have.

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