

Wrestler of the Day – May 21: John Bradshaw Layfield

Ding ding ding. It's JBL.

JBL got his start in 1990 so we'll pick things up with him in 1991 in the GWF as John Hawk against Mike Lane.

John Hawk vs. Mike Lane

Hawk hammers away to start and rips away at the arm. Lane bails to the floor as this is one sided so far. Back in and Lane grabs a headlock before trying some shoulder blocks to no effect. We take a break and come back with Hawk easily winning a test of strength. A big boot sends Lane to the floor again for some major stalling.

Hawk finally gets tired of waiting and pulls Mike to the apron for a belly to back suplex. Back in and Hawk misses a charge in the corner and gets his arm worked over a bit. Lane hammers away as the match drops in intensity. The bad arm is sent into the buckle again and we hit a hammerlock.

We take another break and come back with Hawk hitting a dropkick and shaking his arm a lot. Lane calmly snaps the arm across the rope to take over again, even though the announcers want to know why he's not going for Hawk's bad leg. Hawk fires off some right hands and a hard shoulder, only to have someone named Cowboy Mantell hit him in the back to give Lane a cheap pin.

Rating: D+. This would have been much better if they had cut out about five minutes. Lane wasn't much and I'm pretty sure Hawk was the face out there, which is always odd when the monster is a good guy. It doesn't help that this is in Texas where a cowboy is always going to be over, even though another cowboy interfered.

After several more years in the indies, mainly in Texas, Hawk would head to the WWF as Justin Hawk Bradshaw. One of his first major matches was at In Your House 10, with some famous interference.

Justin Hawk Bradshaw vs. Savio Vega

This is fallout from about five minutes ago on the pre-show. Bradshaw is a big Texan and a newcomer who hasn't lost a match yet but is mad that he can't get a spot on the pay per view. He attacked Savio after his Free For All match so a Caribbean strap match was quickly made. It's the touch all four corners variety again and remember if your momentum is stopped, you lose any corners you've touched. Savio charges in but gets taken down with clubbing forearms and some shots to the back with the strap.

Vega is knocked to the floor and choked up against the post but he manages to pull Bradshaw shoulder first into the steel. The most interesting part of the match is a local independent wrestler throwing beer on Savio and slamming the can into his own head. This would be the Sandman, an ECW mainstay with his cohort Tommy Dreamer next to him. Philadelphia was ECW's home base and this was near the peak of ECW's popularity. The theory was this being a shoot but it turned out to be the two companies working together. Paul Heyman, ECW owner, can be seen holding them back as security takes them out.

Back in and Bradshaw hooks a headlock on Savio and gets three buckles before Savio makes the save before the fourth. Some HARD strap shots to the back have Bradshaw down and Savio gets three buckles as a result before Bradshaw pulls him down to reset the score. A spinwheel kick puts Bradshaw down again but he makes the save after two corners this time.

Bradshaw takes him down with a big boot and a HARD clothesline to get three corners but just like in the first strap match with Austin, Vega follows along and gets them as well.

Bradshaw makes the mistake of pulling on the strap though, sending Savio into his fourth buckle for the win.

Rating: D. So remember the Austin vs. Vega match where there was a ton of drama and hard hitting shots which got people into the match? None of that applies here. This was paint by numbers stuff which wasn't anything interesting at all and was only interesting because of the ECW stuff. Nothing to see here.

Bradshaw would soon become part of the New Blackjacks with Barry Windham. The team didn't do much but they would be in a fourway #1 contenders match at Wrestlemania 13.

Godwinns vs. Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFon vs. Headbangers vs. New Blackjacks

This is under elimination rules and the winner gets a tag title shot tomorrow on Raw. Why not have the title match here and the #1 contenders match earlier is beyond me but the WWF is running scared of WCW at this point so common sense is thrown out the window. The Blackjacks are Barry Windham and Bradshaw. We get some clips of the originals for the sake of old school. The new ones say they're back and they'll beat up all the small people.

Naturally it's a big brawl to start with all eight guys fighting at once. We finally get down to Henry vs. Bradshaw which is a match that has haunted many of my nightmares over the years. A big clothesline puts Bradshaw down and it's quickly off to Thrasher. Bradshaw still has his vest on. He runs over Thrasher though and there goes the vest. In an interesting bit of strategy, Bradshaw tags in Phineas and then punches him in the face.

Phineas pounds on him a bit more but brings in Mosh to face Thrasher. Jerry makes fun of Vince's knowledge of rock music, saying Vince's favorite rock band is Mount Rushmore. After some slam dancing for lack of a better term, it's off to

LaFaon who gets caught in a double flapjack for two. That doesn't last long as it's off to Furnas vs. Windham with the former hitting a quick rana for two. Windham hits a kind of powerbomb to take over but Bradshaw comes in and helps his partner beat down LaFon.

With the help of his partner, Bradshaw suplexes Phil out to the floor. The four members of the two teams head to the floor where Bradshaw shoves the referee and LaFon and Furnas are counted out, giving us two eliminations. So we've got the Headbangers vs. the Godwinns now and Thrasher gets to be in trouble first. It's pretty clear that Vince has no idea which of the Headbangers is which.

Thrasher starts to fight back so he and Phineas spit on each other. Vince implies that Phineas is into bestiality which is an image I really didn't need. Off to Mosh vs. Henry but a clothesline by the Godwinn puts both guys out on the floor. Mosh gets back in as Henry is only on the apron, allowing the Headbanger to hit a springboard clothesline to take Henry back down. Lawler keeps up the rock music jokes by saying Vince thinks Fleetwood Mac is a new burger at McDonald's.

Thrasher misses a moonsault and it's off to Mosh vs. Phineas again. Phineas loads up the Slop Drop (reverse DDT) on Thrasher but Mosh makes the save. Everything breaks down and a top rope seated senton by Mosh is enough for the pin on Phineas to send the Headbangers to Raw.

Rating: C-. This shows you where the tag division was at this point. There were indeed several teams fighting over the titles but that doesn't always make for an interesting series of matches in the division. The Headbangers were different but not a great team at all and the Godwinns were WAY past their expiration date at this point. Not much to see here but it was fast paced.

After doing a lot of nothing for the rest of the year,

Bradshaw would be put in a feud with Jeff Jarrett as part of the NWA Invasion. They would have a match for the NWA North American Title at In Your House 20.

NWA North American Title: Bradshaw vs. Jeff Jarrett

Bradshaw, the native Texan and challenger, chases the NWA (Cornette, Jarrett, Rock N Roll Express and Barry Windham, Bradshaw's former tag partner) to the floor to start. The NWA save for Cornette is quickly ejected to make this as fair as possible. Bradshaw throws Jarrett back inside and whips him with his chaps to start before chopping Jarrett down over and over. A big boot to the face staggers Jarrett and a clothesline sends him to the floor.

Bradshaw makes the mistake of going after Cornette though and Jeff gets in some kicks to the chest to take over. There's a middle rope dropkick from Jeff for two and Cornette gets in some choking of his own. The choking only ticks Bradshaw off and he rolls up Jarrett for two. The referee yells at Jarrett though, allowing Cornette to blast Bradshaw in the bad knee with his tennis racket.

Jeff goes after the knee but gets crotched on the top rope. Bradshaw's superplex is blocked but he catches Jeff in a fallaway slam to put both guys down. There's the powerbomb to Jeff but Bradshaw pulls Cornette into the ring, allowing Jeff to hit Bradshaw in the chest with the tennis racket for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Not as bad of a match as some of them and the Texas man helped get the fans interested but this still didn't do much for me. The NWA angle was little more than a way for Vince to make fun of the organization and make them look like nitwits. The match was nothing special either with a basic knee story which went nowhere.

Bradshaw would become your run of the mill brawler and get a fight with Vader at In Your House 24.

Vader vs. Bradshaw

This is falls count anywhere and no holds barred for no apparent reason. Bradshaw pounds him down into the corner to start and takes him down with a clothesline. A slam and an elbow drop get two for Bradshaw but Vader runs him over and works on the leg. Vader gets two on a splash but Bradshaw kicks him in the face and clotheslines him over the top. The ring bell goes upside Vader's head and Bradshaw adds an elbow drop for two. Bradshaw accidentally punches the post a few times though and Vader slugs him down.

Some shots to the back with the steps would look to have Bradshaw in trouble but he shrugs them off and fires off right hands back inside. Bradshaw misses a clothesline and falls out to the floor where Vader rams him into various metal objects. Back in and the middle rope splash gets no cover for Vader but the Vader Bomb gets two. Bradshaw comes back with two hard clotheslines and a neckbreaker for the pin.

Rating: D-. This would be better as a regular match but as an anything goes match this was nearly a disaster. Vader was done at this point and it was very clear in this match. Just two years ago that Vader Bomb was beating Shawn Michaels and now a midcarder is kicking out at two. This was Vader's last PPV appearance which is the best thing for everyone.

Soon after this, Bradshaw would find the story he'd been looking for: a tag team with Farroq called the Acolytes. They would team together on Raw, February 1, 1999.

Al Snow/Road Dogg vs. Acolytes

Roadie is Hardcore Champion if you're looking for an explanation for the pairing. The brawl starts on the ramp and it's a hardcore match. Snow has a table rammed into his head and this is a big mess from the bell. Bradshaw throws in the steps and Road Dogg has a pencil. Snow and Farroq fight into the crowd and the others join them. They fight to a concession

stand and Snow goes into a barricade. They head outside and Snow hammers on Farrooq who has a garbage can over his head. Roadie and Bradshaw have a table in the ring while Viscera appears in the back to slam Snow. Bradshaw powerbomb Dogg for the pin.

Rating: C. Fun match but the ending was exactly what you would expect it to be. These matches are for fun for the most part and the thrown together team did a lot better than you would have expected them to do for the most part. The Acolytes were still getting the hang of what they were doing.

The team would win and lose the Tag Team Titles in the spring before getting a rematch against the Hardy Boys at Fully Loaded 1999. The match was so one sided on paper that the Hardys, the champions coming in, would need Michael Hayes helping them to make it a handicap match.

Tag Titles: Acolytes vs. Hardys/Michael Hayes

Yep it's a handicap match. At this point I had zero clue which was Matt and which was Jeff. We start in the aisle where they just leave the belts. Who would have thought two of these four would win world titles? I don't think this has started yet. According to Ross it has. Ah there's the bell so Ross was wrong.

We have Farrooq and Jeff in there to start while Bradshaw beats up both guys on the floor. Matt takes out everyone with a top rope moonsault. They really were great fliers back in the day. Hayes is pretty freaking worthless here but what did you really expect? The APA takes over with just power. Matt picks to tag Hayes. Why in the world would you do that? We get a Freebird reference so I'm good for the night. There's Jeff. Crowd is DEAD for this.

I think Lita helped them a good bit to say the least. The Hardys simply aren't that good at this point. Bradshaw gets a nice belly to back suplex off the top. Not bad. Jeff clocks

him with Hayes' cane over the head. Poetry in Motion is still very much a work in progress here. Hayes comes in and a double powerbomb gives the APA their titles back. Edge, Christian and a ladder would be coming soon.

Rating: D+. I didn't like it at all. Hayes was just in the way here as he's old and most of the people here don't know what he used to be nor do they care more than likely. The Hardys would dump him maybe the next night. Either way, the APA would lose the belts to Kane and X-Pac two weeks later so this was just to get Hayes out of the Hardy picture.

The team would be part of the Corporate Ministry for the rest of the year while losing the belts in the process. They would receive another shot at Fully Loaded 2000.

Tag Titles: Edge and Christian vs. APA

I miss Edge and Christian's old entrance where the camera flies all over the place and looks for them and they're in the entry way like normal wrestlers. Edge insults Dallas sports teams which makes me hate them quite a bit. They insult the Kennedy assassination before setting up for flash photography but the APA and their awesome music cuts them off. Bradshaw threatens to put his boot in their ears. Ok then.

He actually uses the term cheap heat. That came out of nowhere. He defends Texas by saying how many titles they've won. That just makes him sound like a geek. I didn't know FTS was more commonly known as Bradshaw. Farroq gets a great step shot in on Christian right off the bat.

This starts off as little more than a squash as Bradshaw just freaking murders Christian. Edge and Christian finally get some offense in as they get the advantage on Bradshaw. I like how they use such generic offense to stay in a match for as long as they can until they can hit a much bigger move. That's a nice little way to do something. It lasts for all of a minute though as the APA dominates again.

We hear for about the 12th time that Bradshaw is from Texas. Seriously, WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT TEXAS??? With the Acolytes hitting their finishers, Edge goes to the floor and grabs a belt. He gets the referee's attention and nails Farrooq with it for the DQ. I kind of like that as it plays them holding the belts even longer. The same time though, it makes them look ridiculously weak and since they were known to keep stealing wins like that, it's rather stupid also.

Either way it was ok I guess. Post match the champions are beaten down even more which for some reason means we should talk about the Rock? That makes no sense but at least they saved it for after the match ended, unlike WCW who likely wouldn't have acknowledged the match going on at all.

Rating: C. It was really short and pointless but it was never dull. That's the best thing here: they kept moving the entire time. That's always a plus as it kept things interesting and made you want to keep watching. I really don't like the whole cheating to keep the belts thing as it makes them look quite weak, but that's fine I guess as it fits them to the letter. However at just over five minutes they didn't have enough time to get anything going so it's about as average as you can get overall.

Occasionally Bradshaw would get some singles matches, including this one at Insurrextion 2001.

Bradshaw vs. Big Show

Odd again. All of these European shows have a bad case of strangeness to them. How weird is it to think that Bradshaw would be a more important world champion than Show? Those chops Show did were freaking insane. EMTs come out to take care of Test. A flying shoulder just looks cool. There goes the referee.

Show goes after Test when he's trying to leave which of course doesn't work. A big boot into a steel chair and the

Clothesline From JBL ends this with Bradshaw winning it for NO explainable reason. Dude it's 2001 and Bradshaw beat Big Show. What freaking sense does that make?

Rating: C-. Not bad for a big man fight. The booking is bearable I guess as it's a show no one is going to see or hear about for months. This was just your standard battle of the big men which usually works pretty well. This was fine for what it was I guess but REALLY short, even for one of these shows.

Back to the tags with the Acolytes getting a Tag Team Title shot on Raw from July 9, 2001 despite not doing much as a team for awhile.

Tag Titles: APA vs. Dudley Boys

Apparently Spike is going to be out for awhile with a broken leg. The APA clears the ring to start and we get down to Bubba vs. Farroq. Off to Bradshaw as the Dudleys take over. The reverse 3D gets two. D-Von pounds on him and it's off to Bubba. He goes to the corner for the ten punches but gets powerbombed out and both guys are down. Off to Farroq and D-Von with Simmons getting a spinebuster for two. 3D doesn't work but What's Up does to Farroq. Bubba goes for a table but Spike comes out, hits Bubba with the crutch and throws him in where Bradshaw's Clothesline gives the APA their third tag title.

Rating: D+. Pretty boring match but I guess the idea here is that if the APA is leading the WWF's army so give them something to make them seem important. That's not a terrible idea actually and it's better than another boring Hardys vs. Dudleys feud for the 7000th time. Not a terrible match and it did its job I guess.

Bradshaw would be a fairly big deal during the Invasion and fight the Alliance every chance he got. This included challenging for the European Title on October 22, 2001's Raw.

European Title: The Hurricane vs. Bradshaw

Hurricane keeps doing his posing and Bradshaw keeps knocking him down. Out to the floor and Molly glares at him. Hurricane tries a dive but Bradshaw... "catches" him I guess you could say, in a fall away slam. By that I mean he tries to and drops Hurricane down on the floor. Back in the ring and Hurricane hits a superkick but it can't even put Bradshaw down. Suplex is countered by Bradshaw and both guys are down. A neckbreaker puts Hurricane down and Molly dives at Bradshaw which goes as well as you would expect. There's the fall away slam for her and the Clothesline gives Bradshaw the title. Too short to rate but it was nothing.

We're going to skip 2002 and most of 2003 as the former was spent mostly on Hardcore Title matches (Bradshaw won it 17 times in three months) and injuries. The Acolytes would be back at No Mercy 2003.

Basham Brothers vs. APA

This is about the APA hurting the Basham's manager Shaniqua. The Bashams are named Doug and Danny, which are the names of my uncles so I've always liked this team. Bradshaw is blonde here which doesn't work for him at all. He and Doug start things off but it's off to Farroq quickly. Off to Danny who has no luck, just like his brother. Were they brothers? I know they really aren't but were they on screen? I'm not sure.

Doug gets in a shot to take over but his splash hits Farroq's knees and a brawl breaks out. Cole and Tazz get into a stupid argument as the Dominator is escaped. The Bashams hit a double belly to back suplex for two and Farroq is in trouble. Bradshaw runs in to try to help his partner, because doing it a minute ago worked oh so well.

Off to a chinlock to eat up a few minutes until Farroq hits a spinebuster and makes the hot tag. Bradshaw cleans house and hits the powerbomb for two on Danny. Everything breaks down

and it's Last Calls (fall away slam) all around. There goes the referee and Bradshaw hits the Clothesline. Shaniqua comes in and hits Bradshaw with a club of some sort for the pin.

Rating: D. The match wasn't terrible I guess, but what in the world was the reason to give this nine minutes on PPV? Also why did we have to see Shaniqua in a dominatrix outfit? The match should have been on Smackdown or cut in half, but that's the danger of single branded PPVs. The Bashams were the flavor of the month on Smackdown while the APA would split in March.

Now let's change pace a bit as the APA would break up due to Farroq retiring, leaving Bradshaw in need of something new. He would have his entire gimmick changed to John Bradshaw Layfield, a Wall Street tycoon. Somehow this resulted in him becoming #1 contender to the Smackdown World Title with his shot coming at Judgment Day 2004.

Smackdown World Title: John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Eddie Guerrero

JBL runs down the Mexicans in the crowd pre match. He's in blue here which is weird looking for some reason. Eddie hammers away to start and we hit the floor almost immediately. JBL tries to run up the ramp but Eddie catches up to him. We've been in the ring about 12 seconds out of the two and a half minutes they've been fighting for. Back to the ring now and it's been ALL Eddie.

Out to the floor again and JBL manages to send Eddie into the steps to break the momentum a bit. They tease the announce table a bit but instead we go back into the ring for more brawling. Eddie gets some punches but a big boot takes him right back down. Cole: JBL's stock will go way up if he wins this match. That was so corny that it was almost not bad.

An overly long headlock goes on as JBL keeps control. After that finally gets broken up Eddie tries to speed things up, only to walk into a fallaway slam on the floor to get us back

in JBL control. Backdrop puts Eddie onto the Spanish Announce Table and we go right back into the ring. This is going way too slowly here. Another slugout follows but Eddie walks into something like a hot shot for two.

Off to a bearhug now as this continues to go way too slow. I get that JBL is a slow guy but this is getting a lot of time and that makes for a boring match more often than not. Eddie escapes and tries to speed up a bit, hitting Three Amigos. Clothesline From JBL and a powerbomb both miss and there goes the referee. JBL is sent to the floor and we go to the table again.

JBL caves Eddie's head in with a chair shot. FREAKING OW MAN! Oh sweet goodness Eddie is bleeding a freaking gusher. Steps to the head as Eddie is reeling. There is blood all over the ring. Clothesline From JBL kills Eddie dead but there's no referee. Another referee slides into the lake of blood and gets a two count for JBL. The third attempt at the Clothesline drills the second referee. Dude, shouldn't the referee that has been down for five minutes get some help?

Huge powerbomb by JBL gets only two as the fans are WAY into this now. The blood isn't flowing off his head not but is only dripping. Sleeper by JBL which is rather smart here but a suplex gets Eddie out of it. Eddie does his dance thing and here he comes again. Crowd is losing it over this. Fallaway slam is countered into a DDT just like the F5 from Lesnar was at No Way Out.

Eddie tries to crawl to the corner for the Frog Splash as it's amazing that he's not dead at this point. Ok maybe that was a poor choice of words. The fans almost gasp at the idea of the Frog Splash but it misses anyway. Bradshaw grabs the title which he puts behind his back and a chair. The referee sees the chair but not the belt. Eddie kicks him low and drills him with the belt for the DQ and the fans aren't happy at all.

Rating: B. This was a good match at times but you can cut off the first 8 minutes or so and no one would notice it at all. The blood is INSANE and if you have a weak stomach you should stay far away from this one. The ending hurts it a lot as they could have done either a fluke pin or simply stopping it for the blood. Either way, the ending hurts this one a lot and considering it wasn't a classic in the first place, that's not good.

Eddie massacres him post match and hits him with a big old chair shot to bust him open too. Oh wait he was bleeding off the belt shot. Another chair shot and Bradshaw is more or less dead. Eddie chases him down for some more as JBL is taken away.

The non-finish would require a rematch at Great American Bash 2004.

Smackdown World title: Eddie Guerrero vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Yes, the concrete match is going last. This is no DQ, unless you intentionally unhook yourself. There's a bell on the rope of course, because we're wrestlers so we all want to be cowboys! Eddie goes for the leg and chokes him out a bit with the rope. That bell is getting really annoying really fast. They have these stupid lights on the corners because just counting the number of corners for each guy is too much for Nick Patrick.

Both guys get two corners but they get their momentum broken up. The rope goes around Eddie's neck and there's a bell shot to put him down. Bradshaw puts him in the Tree of Woe and chokes him upside down as Eddie is in trouble. Here comes the Spanish Announce Table but Eddie blocks a powerbomb through it. Cowbell to the head puts JBL down and it's Eddie in control.

JBL sends him over the table again but Eddie CRACKS Bradshaw

over the head with a chair. Oh yeah he's busted too. That's enough for Eddie to get three corners but JBL breaks it up enough for the fourth to not count. Patrick says the momentum is broken, meaning the streak is broken. Eddie gets three corners again and again JBL grabs the rope. After a JBL DDT, Eddie crotches him with the rope and gets three buckles but the streak is broken.

Three Amigos hit and Eddie adds a frog splash for good measure. In a REALLY smart move, JBL rolls to the floor to stop the fourth corner from being touched. Smart because Eddie can't drag him from the floor like he could in the ring. They go to the top and JBL hits him with the bell. He wraps the rope around Eddie's neck and throws him onto the announce table which doesn't break. Cole says it's like rock or concrete. These jokes write themselves at times.

A powerbomb puts Eddie through the table and both guys are down again. Somehow that only gets three corners back in the ring. JBL gets three corners again but takes a cowbell low to stop things again. Since this is a four corners bullrope match, we get the only ending that ever happens in these things: they both get three and the good guy dives to touch the fourth one just in time.

Rating: B. Pretty solid brawl here but at the same time these matches get really repetitive after awhile. It becomes wrestler A gets a few corners, then wrestler B gets a few corners, then we reset things. The brawling in between that was pretty solid stuff though so I can't really complain here. At the end of the day though, this gave us JBL as world champion. Here's why.

Angle comes out and shows us the replay, which shows that when Eddie dove at JBL, it knocked JBL into the buckle first, which means he's champion. This would go on until Wrestle-freaking-Mania.

JBL's title reign would last into the new year, including a triple threat defense at Royal Rumble 2005.

Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Big Show vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

This match has a backstory that isn't important enough to explain to us. Apparently Angle had a last man standing match with JBL but the winner is even less important than the backstory. JBL is defending. Angle bails to the floor to start so Show runs over JBL a few times. There's the loud chop in the corner followed by a legdrop which finally draws Angle into the ring for a save.

Now it's Kurt getting a big chop in the corner. Cole says that's like getting hit in the chest with a skillet. My question continues to be: how does anyone know what that feels like? Is that what goes on at WWE headquarters when there aren't any shows on? Show clotheslines both guys to the floor to a surprisingly big reaction. Angle tries a German on the floor which fails completely, so Show picks up the steps.

Show loads up the announce table and climbs the steps to chokeslam JBL through said table. Before he can though, Angle hits Show low and blasts him with a monitor, knocking Show through the table. Back inside and Angle puts JBL in an armbar followed by a keylock. Kurt rolls the Germans but walks into a big boot for two. Big Show gets back in and there's a double clothesline and headbutts all around. He slams Angle onto JBL to a big reaction. When did Big Show get this popular? Both guys get crushed in the corner and another double clothesline puts both guys down.

Show loads up a double chokeslam but the other guys go High/Low to take Show down. Angle Germans JBL down and hits a bad Angle Slam which gives JBL two. There's a chokeslam to JBL but he gets a foot on the rope. Out to the floor and Show spears JBL through the barricade in his signature spot,

putting all three guys down.

Back in and Angle goes after Show with a chair but gets flapjacked face first onto the steel. Mark Jindrak and Luther Reigns, Angle's lackeys, come out for the save as JBL's Cabinet try to wake up the champion. Show beats up Jindrak and Reigns as Orlando Jordan puts JBL in the ring for the Clothesline to pin Angle to retain.

Rating: C+. This is one of those matches I was expecting to suck but it wound up being pretty solid. Angle is going to be good no matter what he does and Show had some solid motivation out there for a change. JBL escaping with the title was a recurring theme for nearly a year until he ran into a buzzsaw called John Cena in a few months. Shockingly good match here.

After losing the belt and a rematch to John Cena, JBL would go after the other World Title at Summerslam 2005 against champion Batista.

Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL dollars rain from the sky before we get going. The fight starts in the aisle and a belt shot to the head has JBL in trouble. They head over to some of the equipment with JBL being sent into various metal objects. Batista is whipped into a steel case and they brawl through the crowd to ringside where the champion spears JBL through the barricade. A dazed Batista is sent into the post and we finally get inside the ring.

JBL pounds him down into the corner and whips Batista with the timekeeper's belt. The choke with the belt goes on longer than any human would be alive but Batista fights out and whips JBL with the belt as well. Batista hits the corner shoulders but charges into a boot and JBL's Clothesline is good for two. JBL brings in the steps and loads up a powerbomb off of them, only to be backdropped down instead. Batista hits the spinebuster and the Batista Bomb but he doesn't cover. Instead he picks up

JBL again and powerbombs him onto the steps for the emphatic pin.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much at all and the ending was never in doubt. It's just over nine minutes and about a minute of that was spent on JBL choking Big Dave. JBL was the main event jobber at this point which meant he was ok at best. Batista was still the biggest star in the company at this point but Cena was rising fast.

JBL would get back into the midcard after this, with a shot at the US Title coming at Wrestlemania XXII.

US Title: Chris Benoit vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL is challenging and takes over with a quick headlock. Benoit comes back with a drop toehold but can't get the Crossface this early. Back to the headlock by JBL but Benoit gets his back and pounds on the challenger's neck. The Sharpshooter is broken up very quickly and Jibbles heads to the floor. Back in and Benoit avoids a charge in the corner and lays out Bradshaw with the Rolling Germans. The champion loads up the Swan Dive but JBL crotches him to escape.

JBL cranks up the heel by doing Eddie's chest slap. A superplex puts Benoit down but only gets a very delayed two. There's the Eddie dance and JBL hits Three Amigos to HUGE heat. Benoit knees his way out of the third Amigo and pounds away, only to get kicked in the face for two. Off to a lame chinlock (his hands aren't even locked) by JBL but Benoit suplexes his way out. Now Chris hits Three Amigos to a solid ovation before doing the chest slap. Now the Swan Dive hits for two and Benoit counters the Clothesline into a Crossface attempt, but JBL rolls onto his back and grabs the rope for the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. Just like the opener this was pretty meh but JBL was an awesome heel here. The part of this that sticks in my mind though is Benoit hitting that headbutt. After it hit he

was grabbing his skull and was clearly in pain. Every time I see him hit something like that I cringe a little bit more and wonder if that was the point of no return.

JBL would lose the title a few months later and then take nearly two years off due to a back injury, wrestling only once in between. One of his first matches back would be at the 2008 Royal Rumble against Chris Jericho, who JBL had cost a title shot in December.

Chris Jericho vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Feeling out process to start with JBL hiding in the corner and ropes a few times. Jericho forearms him down and pounds away but gets sent to the floor. That doesn't last long as he slides right back in and hooks the Walls but JBL immediately grabs the rope. A baseball slide keeps Jibbles on the floor where he is sent into the steps. Back in and Jericho charges into a hot shot to put both guys down.

A clothesline (not the one from down under) puts Jericho down as apparently he has a bad throat and neck coming into this. Bradshaw slingshots Jericho throat first into the middle rope and hooks a quick sleeper. Jericho fights out of it and hits a clothesline of his own, only to charge into a big boot. John sends him shoulder first into the post which busts his head open somehow. Back in and JBL pounds away at the cut as a villain would do. Jericho comes back but they botch a clothesline, causing both guys to get booed loudly. A Cactus Clothesline sends them to the floor where Jericho cracks JBL with a chair for the LAME DQ.

Rating: D+. This didn't work at all for the most part. Jericho didn't work at all as a face with the short hair during this comeback and I think everyone knew it. Thankfully he would turn heel over the summer and have the feud of the year with Shawn. The ending to this sucked and I don't think they had any other matches after this.

JBL would of course feud with Cena a bit more, including a parking lot brawl at Great American Bash 2008.

John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

This is in "the parking lot" and likely was taped earlier today for the most part. JBL is in a shirt and tie and has a crowbar. He takes the tie off at least. They have the circle of cars set up and a referee out there. Something metal hits the ground but we don't know where it was from. Now a car turns on and Cena drives it at the car JBL is standing on. Ok now it's on.

Cena chokes him with jumper cables. Then he slams a car hood on him. Now he jumps JBL's balls. That would kind of, um, KILL HIM. Cena picks up an oil drum and chucks it at a car which JBL tries to escape in. Bradshaw gets in some shots but nothing significant. They knock a car door off. Cena went through it so JBL takes over. Powerbomb on a car gets two. Cena gets dropped on the top of a car for two.

Cena goes through a window and isn't busted open. Did they hit the blood quota earlier or something? This is really dull by the way. Cena is knocked down then thrown into the back of a car and JBL goes to get a gas can out of his limo. He covers the car with the gas and throws a lighter on it. Uh yeah I'm done here. They put it out but JBL is stealing a forklift. Cena gets out and Bradshaw is mad.

They brawl even more and Cena takes over, throwing JBL into a car then into a car. Cena gets the forklift and spears the car. He lifts the car up and drives the forklift into the arena. JBL gets beaten up on the stage. There's the Shuffle and Cena loads up the FU. Instead of flipping the fool like a clam shelled cellular phone, he walks towards the car and JBL escapes and throws Cena off the stage into the windshield for the pin.

Rating: N/A. This had nothing to do with wrestling. It was

bad, whatever it was. They got WAY too ridiculous here and I'm sure the fans loved seeing a total of maybe three minutes of this live. They were setting up JBL as the next challenger to Punk and Cena moved onto Batista, but this was still bad.

One of JBL's final stories would be buying Shawn Michaels when Shawn was broke due to the financial crisis. This resulted in JBL getting a World Title shot against Cena at the 2009 Royal Rumble with Shawn being required to help him win.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Cena is defending in case you skipped the previous parts. We get the big match intros here and even a weapons check for old times' sake. Cena takes him to the mat with a headlock to start but JBL counters into one of his own. A shoulder block puts JBL down and out to the floor as we take a breather. JBL whispers something to Shawn before heading back inside for some clubbing forearms to the back.

Cena slams him down for two though and we're still in the early stages. JBL heads to the floor again but this time Cena goes after him. He runs into Shawn though and stops cold, allowing JBL to get in a shot to take over. Shawn didn't move at all. Back in with JBL in control and a standing clothesline gets two. Presumably that one was only from Hoboken.

Off to a chinlock from the challenger as we keep things at JBL's slow pace. A side slam gets two on Cena and he rolls out to the apron. Layfield knocks him to the floor and then sends him into the stairs for two back inside. Cena fights out of a superplex attempt and hits the top rope Fameasser for two of his own. The champ initiates his finishing sequence with all of his usual stuff including the Shuffle. Shawn hasn't been a factor in the first nine minutes or so of the match.

JBL escapes the AA but gets caught in the STF instead. Shawn starts grabbing the ropes but doesn't do anything. Cena lets go of the hold anyway, allowing JBL to kick Cena to the floor.

JBL's Clothesline gets two so he glares at Shawn for some reason. A quick AA attempt misses and JBL kicks the referee down by mistake. The Johns double clothesline each other and it's time for the big moment.

Shawn gets in the ring and is staring at both guys. Both guys get up and Shawn superkicks John. As in the challenger/him employer. He also kicks the champion/the guy he was hired to take out before leaving. Shawn puts JBL's arm across Cena, causing the fans to chant for the champ. Another referee comes out and gets a two count for Layfield and both guys get up. Cena hits a quick AA on JBL to retain.

Rating: C-. The match itself was pretty dull but the drama worked well enough to make up for it. At the end of the day, JBL simply wasn't good enough at this point to hang in a world title match. Cena had to tone it WAY down to let JBL keep up with him and it showed badly. Still though, Shawn more than makes up for it and would go on to have a masterpiece with Taker at Mania so all is well and good.

After losing the blowoff to Shawn, JBL would head back to the midcard again and chase the Intercontinental Title. We'll wrap it up with his title shot on Raw from March 9, 2009.

Intercontinental Title: John Bradshaw Layfield vs. CM Punk

These two had issues a few months back when Punk first won the World Title. A hard shoulder gets two on the champion but he comes back with kicks to JBL's legs. Punk jawbreaks out of a sleeper and hits the running knee against the ropes. JBL bails to the floor to avoid the bulldog so Punk hits a suicide dive to take him down. We take a break and come back with Punk in a bad looking abdominal stretch. At least pull back on the thing John.

The fall away slam gets two and some hard forearms to the back have Punk in even more trouble. A big right hand stops a Punk comeback attempt but he fights out of the corner with a

tornado DDT. Punk gets sent to the apron but comes back with the springboard clothesline followed by the knee and bulldog for two. The GTS is loaded up but Punk takes too much time turning to the hard camera, allowing JBL to rake the eyes. The Clothesline is enough to give JBL the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but I've missed heels using basic moves like a rake of the eyes. It's such a simple way to look evil and it works wonders. Not everything has to be some run-in to distract a guy for a rollup finish and this is proof. Unfortunately modern wrestling writers don't get that and we're stuck with the same stuff over and over again.

JBL would lose the title to Rey Mysterio at Wrestlemania 25 in about 40 seconds before quitting in a big fit. I've heard him call that the perfect way for the character to go out and I can't say I disagree. Overall JBL is a guy that totally overachieved and found the perfect character for himself. It's another example of a guy doing his best when he's allowed to play an exaggerated version of himself, which is a lesson that a lot of wrestlers and bookers should learn.

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