

# NXT – March 18, 2015: Road Trip!

## NXT

Date: March 18, 2015

Location: LC Pavilion, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Jason Albert, Corey Graves, Rich Brennan

This is a very interesting show as we have matches from outside the NXT Arena for the first time. A few weeks back, NXT held some shows in Columbus, Ohio as part of the Arnold Sports Festival and the matches were recorded for TV. Other than that we also have Owens vs. Riley in a showdown over Owens being a bully. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about being in Columbus and previews the major events tonight.

Opening video.

The arena looks similar but there are a lot more seats opposite the Titantron. The wrestlers have to come down some steps off to the side instead of a ramp as well. Finally the cameras are facing the Titantron instead of having it on the right.

## Kalisto vs. Tyler Breeze

Breeze main events one week and jerks the curtain the next? Kalisto takes him to the mat but Breeze bails to the ropes like a heel should. Fans: "WATCH THE FACE!" It's a really good sign if the fans are just as hot on the road. They trade leapfrogs until Kalisto does his hand want into a headscissors, followed by a big flipping wrist drag. He tries to fly a bit too much though and gets dropkicked out of the air for a delayed two.

Breeze rips at the mask and puts on a chinlock as we take a break. Back with Kalisto fighting back but not being able to hit the Salida Del Sol. Instead he dives into the Supermodel Kick for two and Breeze is getting frustrated. Kalisto knocks him down again and nails a 450 but Breeze is

right next to the ropes. Salida Del Sol is countered again and the Beauty Shot is good for the pin at 10:07.

**Rating:** C+. Breeze has been on a roll lately and I'm digging his matches more and more every time. I wouldn't mind seeing him move up a bit higher on the card, but I don't see him fighting Owens or anything like that. Kalisto is great as a high flier and could be something special if he's put on the main roster.

We recap Owens vs. Riley, which is entirely built around Owens being a bully and Riley wanting to stand up to him. Riley has come out of retirement to fight Owens and proved himself against CJ Parker last week.

Hometown girl Alexa Bliss promises to show Sasha Banks what she's made of.

Video on the WWE Experience at the Arnold Sports Festival as well as their visit to a children's hospital and HHH being inducted into the International Sports Hall of Fame. Also includes are clips of Hogan and Flair appearing. Hulk Hogan showed up and thought being NXT Champion sounded good.

Finn Balor tells Alex Riley he'll be watching tonight. Riley is ready for Owens but Balor tells him not to take Owens lightly. We haven't seen Zayn or Neville since Owens hit them and Riley could be next.

Video of HHH talking about what it means to expand and the potential of NXT as a touring brand.

### Colin Cassady vs. Wesley Blake

Carmella is with Enzo and Cass and is booed out of the building. Cass says they're at Arnold Sports Festival where people like to pump weights, but Cass and Enzo like to pump fists. "As for the Australian guy, why don't you didgeridoo yourself a favor a skedaddle?" Cass sends him into the corner to start and the fans declare Blake SAWFT. Wesley runs the ropes but charges into a knee to the ribs as the fans want Blue Pants. I can't say I blame them.

A springboard spinning forearm gets two for Blake and we hit the

chinlock. Colin fights up and stomps away in the corner, setting up a side slam. Murphy gets up on the apron and Carmella gets up to yell at him, only to have Cass boot him down. Carmella goes down at the same time though, allowing Blake to roll Cass up and grab the trunks for the pin at 3:55.

**Rating:** D+. This was nothing special but it advanced the stories. If nothing else it might be a step towards getting Carmella away from the guys, which would be better for everyone involved. There's potential in Carmella, but not as a face and not with Enzo and Cass. Thankfully this isn't WWE where they would just take her off TV and blame her for what happened.

Video on bodybuilder Dana Brooke who has signed with NXT.

#### Alexa Bliss vs. Sasha Banks

Non-title. Sasha is nailing the charisma at this point and is ready to be on the main show. Sasha goes after the nose, which she broke to put Bliss on the shelf for months. The double knees out of the corner gets two and we hit the chinlock. Alexa fights up and moonsaults into a double knee of her own before the Booker T. spinning sunset flip out of the corner gets two. Sasha bails to the floor so Alexa dives out onto her, only to be sent into the apron. Bliss quickly posts her though and wins by countout at 3:18.

**Rating:** C-. Bliss has gotten a lot better in a hurry and seems to be the next project of the division. I still think Bayley is the one to take the title off of Banks (if nothing else because I want to see the fans lose their collective minds) but Bliss is a good choice for a lower level challenger for now. Also, points for not jobbing her in her hometown or having the champ get pinned.

Kevin Owens is ready for Riley but is looking forward to facing Balor as well.

Alexa is happy with her win but Sasha comes in to say that wasn't a pin. Regal pops up and makes the title match for next week.

## Alex Riley vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. The fans chant for Owens to start as they shove each other around. The champ knocks him down and hammers Riley in the back and the fans call Owens Mr. Wrestling. Riley nails a dropkick but gets sent hard into the corner. There's the Cannonball for two before Owens puts on the chinlock. Riley gets up though and blasts Owens with a right hand, sending him out to the apron.

Another right hand puts him on the floor but Owens is ticked off. Back in and Owens misses another Cannonball, setting up a spinebuster for two. Riley hits the ropes on a missed crossbody, setting up three straight backsplashes. Instead of covering though, Owens sends him back out to the floor. Back in again and the pop up powerbomb gives Kevin the pin at 6:00.

**Rating:** C+. This was exactly what it should have been with Owens getting rocked a few times but never being in any serious danger. Riley got to try but gets beaten up in the end and Owens gets to look like a killer all over again. Good stuff here and nothing great, which was pretty much exactly the idea.

Owens goes after Riley post match but Finn Balor comes out to stare him down. Kevin reaches for Riley again but Balor dives off the stage (nothing that great as it's not a high stage) take him down. They head inside but Owens bails before Balor can hit the top rope double stomp. The champ bails but makes sure to get in a cheap shot on Riley because he's a great villain.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This wasn't a spectacular episode, but it was a very successful experiment. The crowd was great on their first trip outside of Florida and that's the best news NXT could have. As for the actual content, this was little more than a preview for next week, but it still worked well enough. Balor vs. Owens could be a lot of fun if they let them beat on each other for fifteen minutes. Good show here and hopefully the first of many road trips.

## Results

Tyler Breeze b. Kalisto – Beauty Shot

Buddy Murphy b. Wesley Blake – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Alexa Bliss b. Sasha Banks via countout

Kevin Owens b. Alex Riley – Pop up powerbomb

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## **Lucha Underground – March 11, 2015: Cages Are Cool**

### **Lucha Underground**

Date: March 11, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

This show is getting better and better every week and this show might be one of the better shows with Johnny Mundo vs. King Cuerno inside a cage. That sounds like the recipe for a big spot to end the match, which could be insane given Mundo's high flying abilities. We've also got all the other guys running around who can blow your mind on any given night. Let's get to it.

We open with a series of quick recaps on Pentagon Jr., Son of

Havoc/Ivelisse and King Cuerno vs. Johnny Mundo.

### Pentagon Jr. vs. Argenis

This is a small step up for Pentagon as Argenis is the brother of the original Sin Cara. Feeling out process to start with Argenis kicking Pentagon in the leg to block a monkey flip. A superkick sends Pentagon to the floor, setting up an Asai moonsault to put both guys down on the floor. Back in and Pentagon gets all ticked off but heads up top and eats a right hand to the face. A hurricanrana gets two for Argenis as Striker calls the referee the Iron Mike Sharpe of officiating due to his constant injuries.

Pentagon kicks Argenis down and hits a VERY loud overhand chop to the chest. A gorilla press into the corner (cool move) knocks Argenis silly and Pentagon puts him in a reverse Tree of Woe for a dropkick to the back of the head. Argenis gets superkicked as Striker randomly mentions Josh Barnett of New Japan. A big flip dive over the top takes Argenis down again and it's the package piledriver into the arm lock for the win.

**Rating:** C. I like Pentagon being all angry and evil, but his matches have almost no flow to them. He'd be a good option as a higher level deadly heel and it seems that's where he's headed. They couldn't just keep feeding him jobbers though so Argenis, who to be fair isn't that higher up on the food chain, was a good step up.

Pentagon snaps the arm to continue his custom.

Catrina goes in to see Fenix and tells him that Mil won't stop until Fenix is destroyed. Therefore, Fenix must bury him.

We get a cool video of Konnan welding together a new metal staff and destroying things with it. Revenge is coming. I said it was cool. I never said it made sense.

We see King Cuerno driving to the arena. That kind of kills the hunter image.

### Ivelisse vs. Angelico

Son of Havoc is referee, which Vampiro doesn't get for some reason. Striker thinks this has Cueto's fingers all over it. Good grief those two make my head hurt. Angelico kisses her hand to start and takes her down with ease but gets caught in an armdrag. They do the same sequence again minus the kiss before Ivelisse hits a nice hurricanrana to send Angelico to the floor, setting up a big corkscrew dive.

Back in and Angelico sends her hard into the corner but misses a running knee. Vampiro thinks Havoc pulled her out of the way, which makes me think Havoc did no such thing. Angelico blocks a knee bar but gets rolled up for a very slow two. Some sunset flips don't work for Angelico but he keeps pulling her down onto his chest to give Ivelisse two counts. Back up and Ivelisse chops Angelico to his knees but Havoc blocks Angelico from doing the same to her.

Angelico's delayed suplex is countered into a guillotine choke but he just rubs her back instead of being in pain. Now Angelico gets somewhere close to serious by kicking her in the head but Havoc breaks up a crucifix bomb. Ivelisse snaps off another hurricanrana for two but Angelico swings at Havoc, only to nail her by mistake. Ivelisse is out cold and Angelico gets the easy pin.

**Rating:** D-. Well that happened. We get the idea that guys and girls fight here, but they've done a horrible job at making the girls look entertaining. You would think the best idea here would be to have Sexy Star vs. Ivelisse a few times, but instead we've had to be reminded that the girls are nowhere near as good as their male counterparts. Thanks for clarifying that Lucha Underground. I never would have gotten it otherwise.

Catrina comes in to see Muertes and warns him of a Grave Consequences (casket) match against Fenix next week. Death is coming for Muertes.

#### King Cuerno vs. Johnny Mundo

Pinfall, submission or escape. Since the announcers don't bother to explain what happened between these two, Mundo pinned him in Aztec Warfare and Cuerno has been hunting him since. Cuerno beat the tar out of him in a regular match that ended in a double countout, so lock them in a

cage. They slug it out to start with Cuerno throwing him into the corner but getting dropkicked for two.

Back up and it's a standoff, much to the crowd's delight. Mundo sends him into the corner and takes him down again as the fans are in Cuerno's corner all of a sudden. Granted this is a pretty easy crowd to please so it's not that shocking. Cuerno gets two off a top rope (in the middle instead of the corner) and we hit the armbars. Now the fans like Mundo but Cuerno shuts them up by sending him into the cage. He continues the theme by rubbing Johnny's face against the steel before going to the cage, only to have Mundo get to the top for a slugout.

Mundo gets knocked down but Cuerno misses a running double knee into the cage. The breakdancing legdrop gets two and Mundo throws Cuerno into the cage. That earns a holy chant, though I'm not sure why. Mundo escapes the Thrill of the Hunt and hits a Regal Roll, followed by a standing shooting star for two. Cuerno pops back up and catches Mundo trying to escape, setting up a Batista Bomb off the cage wall for another near fall.

This time it's Johnny going up for the save but he has to pull Cuerno up by the mask. They kick it out on the top rope until both guys crash down to the mat. Back up and Cuerno is sent into the cage over and over before a spear gets two for Johnny. They fight to the top again with Cuerno chopping Mundo's chest off. Johnny throws him back to the mat but stops climbing down to hit a big corkscrew plancha for the pin.

**Rating:** B. Really fun spot fest cage match here with Cuerno throwing everything he had at Mundo before the big spot at the end. The match was missing drama though as there were only one or two near falls. Other than that though, I don't have many complaints here and this was a good big gimmick match for a promotion of this size.

**Overall Rating:** B. Another good show here but the Ivelisse match brings things way down. She's gorgeous and talented, but no one could survive booking like she was in tonight. It's still a really good show though and they're more than capable of keeping an entertaining show going. There was no Alberto, Texano or Cueto tonight, which means they're firmly in the NXT mode of going from one part of the roster to the other.



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## **Thought of the Day: You Don't Need Time To Be Epic**

Well not always at least. A lot of the time you hear fans say that you need time to create a great match or feud. That's true a lot of the time, but there are occasions where that's not the case. For instance, look at Michaels vs. Undertaker back in 1997. That feud started on August 3 and was blown off (mostly) on October 5. In the span of just over two months, those two started a feud, had a great brawl at Ground Zero and then had one of the best matches of all time at Bad Blood.

That's a rare example, but it means that you can nail a story without needing a ton of time to set it up. Not everything needs to be Rock vs. Cena at Wrestlemania XXVIII. You have to hit almost everything perfectly, but you can pull it off if you do it right.

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# New Column: TNA Is Good

Seriously they are.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-tna-good/34492/>

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## Monday Nitro – October 25, 1999: We Want Wrestling

### Monday Nitro #211

Date: October 25, 1999

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 9,630

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

We're finally past Halloween Havoc and as usual with pay per views, a lot has changed. First up would seem to be Goldberg coming out as both United States and World Champion, but only the former is for sure. After Hogan laid down against Sting for no apparent reason, Goldberg beat the champ in an open challenge, which may or may not be for the title. Tonight we should find out what's going on so let's get to it.

A pointless Sting is walking through the back (I'm been skipping a lot of these segments as they're literally just people walking) and shouting for JJ Dillon while throwing things all over the place.

Opening sequence.

Sting heads to the ring and calls out JJ Dillon, because last night he issued a challenge for a fight, not a title match. Dillon comes out and Sting repeats most of what he already said but throws in that he was

trying to bail them out of a bad situation with Hogan. Why do I have a bad feeling that's the extent of Hogan information tonight?. The title was never on the line, so Sting wants his belt back. JJ agrees that the title wasn't on the line, because WCW never sanctioned that match. Therefore, the title is vacant due to Sting attacking the referee after the match.

Oh come on. That's some very convenient enforcing of the rules given what half the roster gets away with on a regular basis. Also ignore the fact that it wasn't even in a match so why should it have any impact on th....never mind. I'm staying out of the quicksand that is WCW/Russo logic. There's going to be a 32 man tournament and Sting can be a participant. That earns Dillon a beating until Goldberg comes out for the save.

Here are the brackets.

Bret Hart

Goldberg

Perry Saturn

Eddie Guerrero

Norman Smiley

Bam Bam Bigelow

Kidman

Konnan

Total Package

Rick Steiner

Diamond Dallas Page

David Flair

???

Madusa

Brian Knobs

Sting

I'm sure we'll see the other half later, because I'm sure it's completely prepared at this point. Also Madusa is now a man? JJ specifically said 32 MAN tournament.

The Outsiders are here with a cooler but Mike Graham comes up and tells them they have to wrestle tonight. Nash's retirement isn't addressed because that's in the old regime or something.

Norman Smiley says last night's match was amusing and thinks Bigelow is tough. Oh and he likes to dance. If Russo being in charge means more short interviews for people who don't often get TV time, maybe he's not all bad.

#### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Norman Smiley vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Norman is terrified so Bigelow decides this is going to be a hardcore match. Bigelow throws in weapons as Norman hides behind the referee, only to get hit in the head with a broom. He puts the trashcan on Norman's head but Norman kind of headbutts him and falls with a low blow ala Sting. It's time to dance before Norman quickly covers Bigelow for the pin. This was a mess and didn't even break ninety seconds.

Hall and Nash are in the back and Nash says he can't work. Hall says he can't comment until the top of the hour. He won't listen to Mike Graham either.

Recap of the Filthy Animals vs. Ric Flair.

Here are the Filthy Animals with Torrie sporting a shiny silver outfit that Kidman really seems to enjoy. Eddie talks about how WCW will never be able to break the team up. Now Ric Flair has been coming after them, so look at this tape to see what happened. The video show Ric being dragged away to what looks like the desert and being buried in sand. Egads this is really happening.

Kidman says Flair is done and Harlem Heat is next. Mysterio cuts him off from swearing and gives the mic to Konnan for some bad catchphrases, one of which involves the Filthy Animals being in heat. Cue Malenko and Saturn to destroy the Animals, but Torrie runs off, only to get caught by Shane Douglas and Asya. Well they tried to murder Flair so I'm not sure I can sympathize with them when one of their members is kidnapped.

Curt Hennig doesn't like the Powers that Be and if he gets pinned he's fired. Why you ask? The better question is why would you ask "why you ask?" You should know by now that you're never getting a clear answer to most of the logical questions this show brings up.

The Outsiders drink coffee, potentially to sober Hall up.

#### Curt Hennig vs. Lash Leroux

If Hennig gets pinned he's fired. Hennig hammers away in the corner to start and hiptosses Lash across the ring for two. Disco Inferno comes out to praise Lash on commentary but gets interrupted by Curt ramming Lash into the table. They head back inside with Hennig getting two off a knee lift as this is a total squash so far, meaning you can expect a swerve soon. Lash comes back with some right hands and dropkicks before loading up Whiplash, only to have Hennig hit the referee for the DQ. Well he didn't get pinned.

Hennig lays out Lash and Disco with a chair.

The Filthy Animals are looking for Torrie.

A limping Bret Hart arrives.

Here are the Nitro Girls for the Nitro Girls search stuff but Jeff Jarrett comes out to interrupt. Jeff threatens to stroke each one of them and says this tournament is a big work. See, he's the next champion and if Luger disagrees, he can take the Lex Express out of town. Amazingly enough, no one responds to the five year old reference. Oh and he didn't hit Elizabeth last week. Their big plan to get Jarrett over as a heel is to break up the Nitro Girls stuff? He'll be out popping Goldberg in two weeks at this rate.

Sid says the war with Goldberg is far from over.

### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Perry Saturn vs. Eddie Guerrero

Saturn threatens to make Torrie disappear if the Animals interfere. The Animals leave but Eddie jumps him from behind for the early advantage. He goes after the leg as the fans are entirely behind him, because I guess they see kidnapping Torrie as a good thing. Guerrero uses his wrist tape to tie the leg to the ropes for some hard kicks but Saturn quickly rips it off.

A hot shot and gutbuster change control though and Saturn cranks on an abdominal stretch. Eddie's ribs are draped over the top rope before they head outside with Saturn whipping him into the barricade. They're flying through this as you can almost feel the shenanigans coming. Cue David Flair with a crowbar to nail Eddie in the ribs, setting up the Rings of Saturn to give Saturn the win.

**Rating:** C. That's the match of the night isn't it? At the end of the day, you need more than four minutes to get anything special going and even guys like Saturn and Guerrero can only do so much. The David Flair stuff makes sense as he would be upset at Torrie and doesn't want her to be rescued, but it's another case of throwing so much into one show that you can't process it all.

Saturn runs from the invading Animals.

Hall and Nash don't want to fight so they come up with ways of shutting down the show. Nash's best idea: strip in the ring.

The Revolution has Torrie held hostage in a secret location. Does anyone ever think of just flagging down the cameraman and asking where they just came from? Malenko walks out of the room but Benoit jumps him behind and lays wastes to him, clearly swearing without being censored.

Here are the Outsiders, potentially for stripping. Hall does the Survey and says they've been partying in Vegas, but had to come here for the real party. Nash says no one is going to tell them what to do, but Goldberg pops up to threaten them with violence later in the night. The

Outsiders jumped Goldberg before the Sid match last night so we have Goldberg's next feud. We don't have an explanation for Nash's retirement before forgotten but you can't have everything. Or anything around here these days actually.

Here are Randy Savage and Gorgeous George, clad in sparkly red attire because it makes George look good and Savage look....well like Savage actually. Savage says it's been awhile but Russo and the rest of the vultures in the back aren't going to see him hang himself on live TV. However, George is right when she says he's well hung.

You can't kill off the Macho Man like you did Hogan and Flair. The yellow and red and Space Mountain have played themselves out but Savage is still legit. It's time that he passes the torch to the next superstar to win World Titles, set ratings records and be even better than he was. I don't think he would be seen for another six months.

The Animals find the Revolution's dressing room (hint: it was labeled REVOLUTION) but there's no Torrie.

The Revolution tries to get Malenko to chill.

WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Madusa vs. ???

And it's Meng. I'm assuming there's a joke here that I'm not smart enough to get. Madusa fires off punches and kicks which are sold as well as an air conditioner at the North Pole. Meng goes after her but stops to look at her chest, earning him an eye poke. So this is a comedy match? Some choking and a missile dropkick have no effect on Meng so she jumps on his back, gets flipped over and the Tongan Death Grip is good for the win.

Evan Karagias of all people comes out to check on Madusa, but Dean Malenko comes out to challenge Benoit to a last man standing match tonight. There's no connection between Malenko and Karagias. Russo just doesn't know what it means to wait a second.

Nash is taping up.

Curt Hennig and Brad Armstrong are backstage. Brad has been told to leave until he finds a personality and the Powers that Be suggest he call his

little brother. I'm getting a headache and we're not even halfway done with this mess.

Bret has his leg looked at.

#### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Total Package vs. Rick Steiner

Please keep up the short trend here. We get the full monty of WCW's bad production here as Tony asks for stills of Bret vs. Lex, has to stall for about 45 seconds before they come up, has to ignore Rick Steiner's music starting and stopping during the stills, and then we miss the opening of the match because of Benoit vs. Steiner stills. I mean dude, even TNA has their stuff together better than this.

Luger hammers on him to start with his usual array of kicks and forearms as Jarrett comes out to do commentary. Steiner fights back and sends Luger into the buckle as Jeff talks about how he didn't attack Liz last week because he isn't that kind of a man. Tony brings up the WWF but Jeff says these are different days. Jeff goes after Liz but Luger makes a save, only to have Jarrett's guitar shot hit Steiner by mistake. Liz freaks out so Luger checks on her, only to drop her so he can beat the ten count back in to win another short (sweet) match. This would be about three weeks' worth of story crammed into a few minutes.

Liz isn't happy.

Konnan threatens to hurt the Revolution if they harm Torrie and also speaks on cheese.

Benoit tapes his hands.

#### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Konnan vs. Kidman

Time for a stable battle. Konnan takes over quickly and snapmares Kidman down, setting up a basement dropkick. That's not cool with Kidman and they slug it out until Konnan hits the rolling clothesline. The X Factor is countered with a BK Bomb for two but the referee is bumped, as per Russo requirement. Cue Harlem Heat to lay out both guys with finishers, though Stevie doesn't actually go off his feet on the Slap Jack. Mysterio and Guerrero try to make a save but Kidman rolls over onto Konnan to



advance. This looked like a back door out of having partners fight, but more than likely Russo had no idea what he booked.

Eddie has to calm Konnan and Kidman down post match. Konnan agrees and wants a Tag Team Title shot tonight against “these two mark punk busters.”

The Outsiders are wondering who they’ll be facing in their big, and I’m sure totally serious, match. Maybe the Bushwhackers or the Kangaroos?

Quick look back at Bagwell being annoyed at having to job last week. Seriously, that appears to be the story they’re going with.

Here’s Bagwell for a chat. He’s going to start breaking all the rules and doesn’t care about all the sacred things in this business. Last week was the last time he’ll do a job (oh here we go) for the two idiots in the back writing this nonsense. Cue the Harris Brothers in the soon to be named Creative Control gimmick to beat Bagwell down. This would be the worked part after the real stuff you heard from Buff. There are a lot of problems with this, but if you don’t know what a job is in wrestling terms, doesn’t it sound like Bagwell just quit?

#### Dean Malenko vs. Chris Benoit

Last man standing for reasons that aren’t really explained and both guys are in street clothes. They slug it out to start and tumble out to the floor with Benoit being sent into the barricade over and over. That goes nowhere so they get back inside, only to have Benoit crotch Malenko against the post. That’s not something Benoit would normally do.

Chris chops away in the corner before a belly to back suplex sends Malenko down. They’re both up at six so Benoit rolls some Germans, only to get kicked low. Dean tosses him over the top and out to the floor for more whips into the barricade. Back in and Benoit suplexes him down again for a short count before a double clothesline puts both guys down but only Benoit beats the count.

**Rating:** C-. This is Vince Russo in a nutshell: a last man standing match announced with maybe half an hour notice that gets seven minutes and ends

with a clothesline because we need to get on to all the other AMAZING things he has planned for us, like three minute nothing matches. How did adding a gimmick to this match help? Benoit and Malenko can have a good match with each other in their sleep but they have to add in a last man standing gimmick for the sake of adding one in, thereby making it look like a less important gimmick going forward. Well done in just seven minutes.

Post match the Filthy Animals come out but Douglas (with his arm in a cast) and Saturn show up on stage with Asya holding Torrie. Shane babbles about hurting Torrie and Dean is allowed to leave. The Animals chase after him and get to the parking lot where both groups speed away. I guess this is action adventure or something? Also, no explanation for why Malenko did what he did last night. I'm not expecting any reason after this point.

#### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Sting vs. Brian Knobs

Two ball bat shots to the chest for the pin in thirteen seconds. Yeah that's going to keep Sting a heel. To recap, the brackets said Sting vs. Knobs, Tony said Sting vs. Morrus, Sting actually fought Knobs. Conclusion: Tony Schiavone is incompetent.

The Outsiders talk strategy for later.

Bret Hart has a hairline fracture but is going to fight Goldberg anyway.

#### Tag Team Titles: Harlem Heat vs. Kidman/Konnan

Harlem Heat is defending. Stevie hammers Konnan down to start and stomps Kidman on the apron. All hail King Stevie. More pounding ensues until Konnan clotheslines both champs down for a breather. Off to Kidman but he eats a clothesline as well to give Stevie control again. It's quickly back to Konnan with Booker taking over with right hands and a side slam. The champs start double teaming Konnan as I guess they're heels tonight, despite the fans being all over the Animals earlier in the night.

Stevie knees him down and cranks on an armbar. Back to Booker who misses the ax kick, allowing the hot tag to Kidman. A quick Dudley Dog staggers

Booker but Stevie comes back in to set up a Hart Attack with a Harlem Side Kick instead of a clothesline. Konnan gets back up and goes after Booker, allowing Kidman to load up another Dudley Dog, only to have Stevie counter with a bridging belly to back suplex, but Kidman raises his shoulder for the pin and the titles.

**Rating:** D+. Well that happened. Was there any reason to not just give Kidman and Konnan the belts last night? Other than a “shocking” title change that is? The match was nothing to see, again mainly due to time, even though this was one of the longer matches of the night at just over five minutes. Sign of the Russo times: that’s the third title change, not counting the belts being vacated, in eight days.

Goldberg says he’s always been brutal and the match with Sid was just showing that side.

#### WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Diamond Dallas Page vs. David Flair

Kimberly grabs the mic and starts up the catchphrases in that great acting voice of hers. Page wants Flair out of the ring and grabs him by the neck before kissing him on the cheek. He makes the mistake of turning his back on the crazy man though, allowing David to get in some crowbar shots. Kimberly gets in to call David off and he leaves as Page is looked at by medics. No match.

#### Outsiders vs. ???

The Outsiders are in street clothes. Cue the Harris Brothers....who step aside so a bunch of adult chicks can come out, one of which appears to be smuggling basketballs in her shirt. The bell rings and my goodness they’re actually doing this. Tony: “The Powers that Be are looking for ratings and they’re going to get them!”

Hall starts with the blonde but doesn’t know where to put his hands. She headlocks him into her chest and this is dying before my eyes. More “comedy” ensues and Hall does the Flair Flop, earning him a spank. The fans clap for the hot tag and Nash is all fired up for the other blonde. He gets the laughably enhanced brunette but both Outsiders lay down for a

double pin. You think I'm rating this?

Goldberg comes out to clean house before the brunette can take her top off.

### US Title/WCW World Title Tournament First Round: Goldberg vs. Bret Hart

This is for Goldberg's US Title for no apparent reason. Bret limps down to the ring because of the leg injury over the last few weeks. Goldberg takes him into the corner and gives a clean break. Instead it's the gorilla press into a powerslam to plant Bret but Goldberg doesn't want to follow up.

A leg lock has Bret in trouble but he's right next to the ropes. Bret gets dropped again as this is coming off like an angle instead of a match. Goldberg stomps away in the corner and pulls Bret out by the leg. Another leg lock makes Bret scream so Goldberg lets go and demands that the referee stop it. Bret says keep going so Goldberg throws him back to the mat.

Goldberg charges into the good foot in the corner and Bret puts on a sleeper. That goes as well as you would expect with Goldberg throwing Bret onto the referee. Hart is thrown outside so cue the Outsiders and Sid (in his gear due to reasons of insanity) to lay Goldberg out. Somehow the referee looks at this and doesn't call for a DQ, allowing Bret to crawl back inside for the pin, even though Goldberg was sitting up when Hart got back in.

**Rating:** D+. This was kind of a mess but not as bad as it could have been, again due to having more time (nearly EIGHT minutes!). However, it does make the events of last night seem like a big waste of time. Was there any reason to have Luger make Bret give up if Bret is winning the US Title here? Or to have Goldberg win two titles in one night and then lose both twenty four hours later? What a mess, but this was one of the less messy messes of the night. Also, this is another potential Starrcade main event thrown away for free on TV. Yeah there would be a rematch, but this wasn't really making me want to see them again.

Here are the updated brackets for the first half of the tournament.

Bret Hart

Perry Saturn

Norman Smiley

Kidman

Total Package

Diamond Dallas Page/David Flair (no winner so it's not clear)

Meng

Sting

What a glorious set of options.

**Overall Rating:** F. When the best things I can think of on a show are Torrie and Kimberly looking good, you can tell it's been a waste of three hours. The title matches ranged from a series of quick ways out of having a match to adding angles to matches so Russo can cram every single thing he can think of into the show. It's been said that Russo wants nothing to do with wrestling and that was never more clear than here.

One thing he does love though is the Filthy Animals, who were all over this show. Their story made sense for the most part, but it's very clear that the audience is already having problems with who they're supposed to cheer for. That's the shades of gray idea that Russo likes to use, which still doesn't seem to work 90% of the time.

This was a huge mess with WAY too much stuff going on to keep track of anything. I watched this show over the span of about twenty four hours and I'm struggling to remember half of what happened on it. None of the things you see has the chance to stick with you because they have to get on to the next idea. There was a line from HHH when he was on Austin's podcast that would really serve Russo well: there's always next week. It's ok to let something play out on one show and do something next week (or on Thunder to make that show actually mean something for a change).

Here's the thing: yeah the WWF is pretty lame right now with all the

sports entertainment nonsense, at least it made sense and had the charisma to carry things through. This show feels like someone watched Raw and said "I CAN DO THAT!" and got a job running a wrestling comp.....oh dear goodness that's pretty much what happened isn't it? Maybe this is Russo getting his first ideas out of the way early and it'll get better later, but for now though, the Russo Era is terrifying.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XIX: Just How Good Is It?

## Wrestlemania XIX

Date: March 30, 2003

Location: Safeco Field, Seattle, Washington

Attendance: 54,097

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz, Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

We're into the brand split now, which means there are two world titles to deal with. On this show however there are two other matches which could easily be considered the main event. This show is considered one of the best Wrestlemanias of all time but I've never been the biggest fan of it due to reasons I'll list later on. My opinion has been changed before though so let's get to it.

The opening video is about what Wrestlemania means to everyone. This is the theme they went with last year and it works here like it did last year. Interestingly enough most of these highlights are from Wrestlemania X7 instead of last year's show.

The theme song is called Crack Addict. Needless to say this was never mentioned on TV.

### Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Matt Hardy

Matt is defending and this is during his Matt Hardy Version 1 period. In other words, he was completely self obsessed and had factoids popping up on screen during his entrance (Matt is appearing in his 4<sup>th</sup> Wrestlemania, Matt often wonders how they did Wrestlemania without him, Matt strongly dislikes mustard etc). He also has Shannon Moore as his Mattitude Follower (MF'er). Matt tries to speed things up to start but Rey backdrops him to the apron and adds a fast headscissors to take over. Oh and Rey is starting the "dress up like a superhero at Wrestlemania" thing here by wearing a Daredevil themed mask.

Rey loads up a sunset bomb to the floor but Moore makes another save. The champion takes over with a shot to the ribs for two back inside before hitting a Ricochet (kind of side slam) for two. Rey jumps into a kick to the ribs but still counters the Twist of Fate into a rollup for two. The Side Effect gets two for the champion and it's off to a bow and arrow hold.

That doesn't last long so Matt tries a shoulder into the corner, only to go shoulder first into the post. Rey hits a springboard seated senton and a tornado DDT for two each but Moore breaks up the 619. Twist of Fate gets two and Hardy is getting frustrated. Matt loads up a superplex but gets countered into a rana out of the corner for two. Moore tries to interfere again but Hardy is rammed into him instead, allowing Rey to hit the 619. The West Coast Pop is ducked though and Matt rolls him up with a handful of ropes to retain.

**Rating:** C+. This felt like it ended out of nowhere which isn't the right way to end a match like this. Mysterio was brand new and WAY over at this

point, so not giving him the title here was kind of a headscratching move. Rey would win the title from Hardy, although it wouldn't be for another three months. The match itself was still pretty solid stuff though with both guys moving all over the place and Matt using enough power moves to counter Rey while still being fast enough to be a cruiserweight if that makes sense.

The Miller Lite Catfight Girls are here. This would be your celebrity involvement for the year. They were from a series of beer commercials and would argue over various stupid things, in this case which match is bigger: Vince vs. Hogan or Rock vs. Austin III.

We recap Undertaker's partner for later tonight, Nathan Jones, being laid out by A-Train and Big Show earlier tonight.

Limp Bizkit plays Undertaker to the ring and no one cares. By plays to the ring I mean performs the song until Taker finally comes out.

#### Undertaker vs. A-Train/Big Show

Taker avoids a sneak attack to start and hits a quick chokeslam on A-Train for two. Big Show pulls him to the floor though and will be starting it seems. Taker has to fight out of the wrong corner and it's quickly off to A-Train. The dead man busts out a LEAPFROG of all things before taking A-Train down with a back elbow. Old School hits but Taker has to punch Big Show instead of covering.

The Derailer (chokebomb) puts Taker down and Big Show rams him into the post for good measure. Back in and A-Train hits a slingshot into the middle rope for two. Big Show comes in again and all Taker can do is throw desperate right hands. A Big Show chokeslam is countered into a Fujiwara Armbar of all things but A-Train comes in to break it up. Taker throws him in a cross armbreaker but Big Show legdrops him to take control.

Off to an abdominal stretch by Big Show to slow things down a bit. A-Train adds in some cheating before coming in for an abdominal stretch of his own. Now Taker counters into one of his own to complete the set (You can own them all!), only to have A-Train hip toss his way out of it. A-



Train clotheslines him down and talks some LOUD trash before Taker comes back with right hands. A running DDT gets two for Taker but it's back to Big Show.

Taker is like screw this defense stuff and pounds away on Big Show in the corner before running across the ring over and over for clotheslines to both guys. The jumping clothesline puts Show down but a bicycle kick from A-Train puts him down all over again. There's a Big Show chokeslam but here's Nathan Jones in the aisle to knock out Big Show with a spin kick. Jones come in and kicks A-Train down, setting up the Tombstone to continue the Streak.

**Rating:** C. Another not bad match here with Taker doing what he could with two guys this size. It was kind of slow, but there's only so much you can do with this kind of a clash of styles and no partner for the Dead Man. While definitely not memorable or anything, it did well enough at what it was supposed to do, bad musical number aside.

Undertaker waves an American flag post match to show how awesome he is.

The Catfight Girls run into Stacy Keibler and Torrie in the back with talk of a new marketing campaign. Next.

We recap the Heat match where the Dudleys cost RVD and Kane the tag titles for no apparent reason. This won't be mentioned again tonight.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz vs. Victoria

Victoria is defending and is still psycho here. She's also Tara for you TNA fans. Jazz hits a quick dropkick for two on Trish before Victoria can even get to the ring. Off to what we would call a Last Chancery to the Canadian after the champion is knocked to the floor. Everyone winds up outside with the champion taking over. She sends Trish back inside for a slingshot legdrop, getting two. Jazz and Victoria square off now before turning their attentions back to Stratus for some double teaming.

That goes nowhere though as it's time for the villains to fight again with Jazz getting two off a powerslam. Trish comes back with a rollup on Victoria for two but she clotheslines Trish down for two as a result.

Jerry: "Trish is like a quarter among pennies in there." JR: "...what?" Jazz hits a sitout powerslam for two on Stratus before arguing with Victoria even more. A spin kick by Jazz hits Victoria by mistake and allows Trish to roll her up for two. The Chick Kick puts Jazz down and the Stratusphere does the same to Victoria.

The champion is knocked to the floor as Jazz puts Trish in a half crab which is transitioned into an STF. Victoria's boyfriend/manager Steven Richards comes in to send Jazz to the floor, allowing the other two to trade rollups for two each. Jazz comes back in and lifts Trish up for a double chickenwing before dropping her down on her uh...face. Yeah face. Victoria kicks Jazz down but misses a moonsault, knocking herself to the floor. Richards comes in and hits himself with a chair. As he goes to the floor, Trish hits the Chick Kick on Victoria for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** C. Not bad again here and one of the better women's matches I've seen in a long time. There wasn't much of a story being told here but at the same time, they looked like they knew what they were doing and never looked lost, which puts them miles ahead of anything in the last three years of Divas matches.

Hollywood Rock doesn't want to hear about the People because they booed him last year. Rock is indeed a sellout because he sells out every Wrestlemania he's been at. Tonight he doesn't care about the people because tonight is about fulfilling his destiny by beating Austin at Wrestlemania once and for all. He talks about everyone remembering Act III and they'll remember it tonight when Rock beats Austin in their final encounter at Wrestlemania. Not his best work here.

#### Smackdown Tag Titles: Los Guerreros vs. Chris Benoit/Rhyno vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

Haas and Benjamin are defending here. This is Benoit's reward for having the match of the year against Angle two months earlier, followed by a feud with the freaking FBI while Kevin Nash got world title shots on PPV. I'm sure HHH has NOTHING to do with this right? It's a big brawl to start until we get down to Benoit vs. Guerrero for a chop off. They collide in the middle of the ring with both guys going down. Rhyno comes in to face

Eddie and gets two off a powerslam.

Off to Shelton who pounds Rhyno down before hitting an elbow to the face for two. Off to Haas for a double tag team by the champions on Rhyno. Rhyno throws Haas around with ease and it's off to Benoit for more chops in the corner. A snap suplex gets two as does its belly to back cousin. Back to Rhyno vs. Benjamin as the announcers talk about Haas and Benjamin having stage fright.

Eddie comes in and dropkicks Rhyno down before it's back to Benoit for more chopping on his fellow dead guy. Eddie snapmares him down and loads up the Frog Splash, only to have Benoit run over to the corner for some crotching and a superplex. Guerrero comes right back with a brainbuster for two as Haas breaks up the cover again. Off to Chavo who fires off some fast clotheslines to the champions, only to get caught in Rolling Germans by Benoit.

Benjamin comes in off a blind tag and superkicks Chris down for two. Eddie tags himself in and collides with Benoit to put both guys down. Shelton comes in to work on Benoit some more and a legdrop gets two. Eddie breaks it up with a Frog Splash but Chavo tags himself in, only to be suplexed down by Haas. Rhyno comes in for some Gores including one to Chavo, but Benjamin comes in (I have no idea if he was legal) and steals the retaining pin on Chavo.

**Rating:** C. The match was fine but it had no business being on Wrestlemania. This could have been on any given episode of Smackdown and no one would have noticed the difference. Rhyno and Benoit were just thrown together while the Guerreros were a regular team and former champions. Not bad here but not Wrestlemania worthy.

The Catfight Girls and Stacy/Torrie now argue over who made Wrestlemania. This is so stupid. They're going to settle the argument in bed. Oh dear. One of the girls keeps saying Hulk "Horgan".

Right here is where things start to become problematic. There are five matches left on the card and any one of them could be a PPV main event on a major show. The problem is there's nothing but that left and we're only an hour into the show.

We recap Shawn vs. Jericho. Shawn returned last year and won the world title in a shocker. The two of them started feuding right before the Rumble where they eliminated each other. Jericho wanted to be a wrestler because he wanted to be Shawn Michaels. People started calling him the next HBK, but he wanted to be the first Chris Jericho. Jericho then went insane with the jealousy and obsession with being the best by destroying Shawn with a chair. One night when Jericho was walking through the entrance, Shawn superkicked him and said he would see Jericho at Wrestlemania.

### Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels

As Shawn comes to the ring he fires off a bunch of confetti canons but some of them don't work. Shawn's "what are you gonna do" look is funny. Lockup to start with Shawn taking over via an armdrag. Jericho escapes the armbar attempt so Shawn lounges on the top rope to rub it in. Off to a hammerlock by the Texan and we get a nice technical sequence with the two mirroring each other very nicely. Shawn hooks a headlock takeover for some token two counts as things are still in first gear.

Back up and Jericho avoids a leapfrog and slaps Shawn in the face. Shawn slaps him right back and avoids a charge, sending Jericho out to the floor. A baseball slide keeps Jericho in trouble but back inside he rolls through a top rope cross body for two. Jericho hits a spinwheel kick to put Shawn down again before sending him into the buckle. Shawn blocks the bulldog though and crotches Jericho in the corner. At least Fozzy will have some higher pitched songs now.

Shawn puts on a Figure Four of all things but Jericho quickly rolls it over. Another attempt at the hold is countered and Jericho sends Shawn shoulder first into the post. Jericho tries to throw him to the floor but Shawn skins the cat into a headscissors to bring Jericho outside with him, followed by a sweet plancha to take Chris down again. Shawn tries a dropkick on the floor, only to be caught in the Walls of Jericho.

The American's back is all messed up again now and Jericho rams him back first into the post a few times for good measure. As Shawn tries to get back in Jericho hits that sweet springboard dropkick of his and nails

Shawn right in the face. A pair of suplexes get two for Jericho back inside and there's a backbreaker for good measure. Off to a chinlock with a knee in Shawn's back to give them a breather.

Shawn fights up and counters a backdrop into a DDT to put both guys down. Jericho still gets up first anyway and hits Shawn's forearm and nipup combo for good measure. Shawn nips up as well and starts slugging away before hitting a backdrop to put Jericho down. The moonsault press out of the corner gets two and they trade pinfall attempt at a very fast pace, resulting in Shawn rolling out of the Walls. Gee his back seems fine all of a sudden.

Jericho hits a northern lights suplex for two but Shawn bridges up into a backslide attempt, only to have Chris knock him down. There's the bulldog put Shawn down but the Lionsault only gets two. Shawn tries a standing rana but gets countered into the Walls as Jericho to put Michaels in BIG trouble. Ok maybe bot so big as he makes the rope a few seconds alter. Shawn grabs a quick small package for two but gets caught in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to put him back down.

Jericho loads up Sweet Chin Music for the final insult and it hits just about perfectly. That only gets two as does a cross body by Shawn. Shawn keeps the thunder stealing theme going by trying the Walls on Jericho but has to opt for a catapult into the corner instead. Jericho comes back with a belly to back superplex attempt but Shawn counters in mid air into a cross body for two.

Michaels goes up again but Jericho kicks the referee into the ropes to crotch Shawn down on the top. Jericho tries a superplex but gets shoved down and hit with the top rope elbow for two. Shawn loads up the Superkick but gets caught in the Walls again. Jericho drags him back to the middle of the ring but Shawn makes it on the second attempt.

A boot to the faces gets two for Shawn as the fans are WAY into this now. Back up and Jericho whips him hard into the corner for a Flair Flip to mess with the back even more. Chris tries a belly to back suplex but Shawn flips over and jumps up into a rolling cradle for the pin out of nowhere on Jericho.

**Rating:** A-. What did you expect off a match like this? They beat the heck out of each other here, although Shawn's eternally on and off selling was a bit distracting. They did a great job of telling the back and forth story though, and that's what the whole point here was. It's also a loss that doesn't hurt the loser which is always a good thing.

Post match Jericho kicks Shawn low like a real heel.

Sylvan Grenier, a crooked referee, goes in to see Vince.

We get the new attendance record announcement.

Limp Bizkit performs Crack Addict live. Again, not the best use of PPV time to say the least.

It's time for the Catfight nonsense. The Girls are brought out as are Stacy and Torrie, all of whom sit on a bed for effect. This is exactly what you would expect: clothes being ripped off, spanking, Coach being stripped down. You know the drill.

We recap Booker T. vs. HHH which is borderline uncomfortable. Booker talked about being an ex-con and making his way up to where he is now. HHH started saying "someone like you shouldn't be world champion", which very quickly came to have extremely racial overtones. Booker won a battle royal for the shot and pinned HHH in a tag match leading up to this.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Booker T

HHH is in his manly purple trunks here. They fight into the corner to start with Booker smacking HHH in the face a few times to take over. A backdrop puts HHH down but he comes back with a clothesline. The champion goes up top but just like his mentor, he gets armdragged down with ease. A clothesline puts HHH down for two but Booker goes up and gets knocked down to the floor for his efforts.

Booker gets sent into the announce table as the referee tells HHH to get back in, complete with some very salty language from the referee. Lawler keeps making jokes about Booker being an ex-con as HHH gets two off a neckbreaker. Booker tries to fight back with right hands but gets caught in a spinebuster for two for the champion. A suplex is escaped though and

Booker DDTs him down for no cover.

Booker pounds away on HHH before taking him down with a forearm. A spinning variety of said forearm gets two but HHH comes back with his lame sleeper, which was the move he was trying to get over at this point to no avail. The facebuster staggers Booker but he comes back with a quick spinebuster for two. HHH tries going up again but jumps into a jumping superkick for two.

The Harlem Side Kick misses HHH and Booker crashes out to the floor. Flair gets in some shots before sending Booker back in for a freaking Indian Deathlock as we continue the trip back to 1974. Since the hold goes on forever and I have a chance to look at it, the question occurs to me of why does that hold hurt? Their legs are in the exact same positions, so why would it only hurt Booker?

Anyway Booker gets to the rope for the break and we get to the work over the leg to set up the Figure Four because we need to pay tribute to Flair every 18 seconds portion of the match. A rollup out of nowhere gets two for Booker and he counters the Pedigree, only to be kicked into the referee in the corner. Not that it matters as the referee counts a quick two off a rollup anyway.

A big back elbow puts HHH down and the scissors kick looks to finish but Booker can't cover. The delayed cover gets two and Booker goes up top. He has to knock Flair down, allowing HHH to load up a superplex. That gets broken up too though and it's the Harlem Hangover (flip legdrop) for a very close two thanks to Flair. Not that it matters though as HHH kicks him in the leg, hits the Pedigree, covers 30 seconds later and retains the title.

**Rating:** C+. The match wasn't horrible but TOTALLY the wrong booking here. There was zero reason to have HHH go over here other than he wanted to. Booker had been built up perfectly over the last few weeks and every sign pointed to him winning here, but instead HHH absolutely has to go over to set up that EPIC Kevin Nash feud in a few months.

Wrestlemania 20 is in Madison Square Garden.

We recap Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon. This feud was A MESS as all of a sudden Hogan came back and Vince decided he hated him so they should fight. The problem is Vince never quite made his reasons for suddenly hating Hogan clear other than Vince was nuts. This led to a debate about which of them made Wrestlemania and saying the match was 20 years in the making. Not exactly but when nothing else in the feud makes sense, why should this?

### Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon

This is a street fight because that's how Vince rolls and if Hogan loses he has to retire. Hogan pounds away to start before pounding away on the mat. Vince is knocked down into the corner and stomped down for good measure but he gets in a thumb to the eye to give himself a breather. A clothesline takes Hogan down and Vince Pounds away in the corner. He drops some knees into Hogan's shoulder as we actually get an attempt at psychology here. Seriously, why?

Vince wraps the arm around the post before hooking a test of strength grip with Hulk in trouble. Hogan tries to fight up but gets kicked right back down. That works so well that they do it again before Vince throws Hogan out to the floor. With Hogan in trouble Vince picks up a chair but the swing only hits post. Hogan pounds him down and hits a chair shot to Vince's head for good measure, busting Vince open.

They head back in, only for Hogan to punch him out to the floor. Another chair shot to the back puts Vince down as does a third. Hogan swings again but knocks out the Spanish announcer by mistake. Vince hits Hogan in his Real American testicles as the slow brawling continues. A chair shot puts Hogan down and Vince pulls out a ladder, making me think this ends badly.

Hulk is busted open too as Vince lays him onto the announce table. In the big spot of the match, Vince climbs the ladder and drops a "leg" through Hogan and through the table. Hogan is thrown back in as Vince gets a lead pipe. He looks up from under the ring apron and has a hilariously evil grin on his face. Vince loads up a pipe shot but Hogan hits him low. Cue RODDY PIPER of all people to blast Hogan in the head with the pipe. This



surprises Cole and Tazz because...they're not that bright. Seriously, Piper and Hogan HATED each other and they're surprised he attacked Hogan? Why?

Piper leaves and Vince gets two off the pipe shot. This match needs to end like NOW as it's well past the point of entertaining and is reaching stupid. Vince goes for the pipe but is stopped by the referee, causing the referee to go flying out to the floor. The EVIL French referee from earlier today comes out as Hulk is hit with another pipe shot and a Vince legdrop for two. It's Hulk Up time though and he lays out both Vince and the crooked referee before hitting the big boot and THREE legdrops to kill Vince dead for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. This wasn't the worst match in the world but going twenty minutes completely misses the idea of something like this. Again I'm not sure what this accomplishes other than setting up Hogan vs. Piper in a feud that didn't exactly light the world on fire in 2013. Fun but pretty awful match here.

Shane McMahon comes out to check on his father post match. He glares at Hogan but nothing happens. Ok then. Ever the jerk, the bloody Vince flips off Hogan to end things.

We recap Rock vs. Austin III. Austin came back from walking out on the company due to boredom and the newly heel Hollywood Rock wanted to finally beat Austin at Wrestlemania. Do you need much else of a story beyond that?

### Steve Austin vs. The Rock

Austin pounds away to start but can't hook an early Stunner. Rock bails to the floor but gets clotheslined down in the aisle. Austin rams him into the steps and chops away before dropping him onto the barricade a few times. Rock is whipped HARD into the steps before they head back inside. A big clothesline puts Rock down but he takes out Austin's bad knee to send Steve to the floor.

Rock stomps away on the knee as Austin stumbles around ringside. The leg is wrapped around the post but Austin pops up with more right hands. Rock

kicks the leg out again and puts on the Sharpshooter, only to have Austin crawl to the rope. JR goes on a big rant against Lawler about how this is a wrestling match and not about puppies or Hollywood. Rock wraps the leg around the post a few more times before heading outside and putting on Austin's vest.

Austin comes back with a clothesline and the Thesz Press to pound away on Rock. The middle finger elbow keeps Rock down again and it's time to stomp a mudhole, but Rock comes back with right hands. Austin counters with a Rock Bottom of his own for a very close two. Rock fights up and hits a Stunner of his own out of nowhere for two more. Back up again and Rock pounds away, only to walk into the real Stunner for another close two.

Austin goes to pick Rock up but the guy with Austin's vest on hits him low to break it up. The People's Elbow misses but the Stunner is countered into a spinebuster, followed by the removal of the vest and the Elbow for two. A Rock Bottom gets two on Austin, another Rock Bottom gets two but a BIG Rock Bottom is finally enough to end Austin.

**Rating:** B+. It's definitely a step or three below the one from two years ago but it's definitely still entertaining. My problem with it as usual though is that it doesn't have anything on it. When you have two huge matches between the two before when they were on top and now you get them both well past their primes for nothing but pride, it's a bit harder to get into it. Still very good, but not as great as their others.

Austin salutes the crowd for the final time as he leaves. As of this 2013, this is Austin's final match.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle for the main event. The idea is simple: Angle is an awesome wrestler, Lesnar thinks he's better. Brock won the Rumble to get the shot and tonight is a mega showdown. At this point though, Angle's neck is basically hanging on by a thread.

There was a very real chance he would have to retire before the match, but he begged and pleaded to be allowed to have this match, which most people believed would be his last. There was a match in Pittsburgh on Smackdown where Lesnar beat Angle, but it wound up being his very similar

brother Eric. This match was originally going to be the title change because Kurt couldn't go at Wrestlemania.

### Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

If Angle is disqualified or counted out or if anyone interferes, he loses the title. Lesnar has slightly injured ribs and Cole's voice is almost gone. Brock sends him into the corner to start but Kurt takes him down to the mat with a front facelock. They fight over an armbar with neither guy being able to get extended control. Now it's a fight over a headlock as the fast paced mat work continues.

Lesnar rolls Angle off and it's a standoff. Brock takes him down with an armdrag into an armbar but Kurt grabs a rope. He pounds away at Brock's back but Lesnar fires off some shoulders into Angle's ribs in the corner. A powerslam puts Angle down for two but Angle comes right back with a German suplex. After Brock hits a fast gorilla press, Angle hits another German to send Brock's ribs into the buckle.

Angle goes after the ribs like a barracuda, stomping away in the corner before hooking a chinlock with a bodyscissors. He shifts it into a kind of crossface grip before into a chinlock. A knee to Brock's back sends him out to the floor but as they come back inside, Brock plants him down with a spinebuster. Lesnar fires off some clotheslines and shoulders in the corner, only to charge into an elbow. Brock is fine with that by snapping off an overhead belly to belly and another one for two.

Kurt comes back with Rolling Germans and Brock is spent. Angle's neck is bothering him though and you can see his eyes not looking right. The Angle Slam is countered into an F5 attempt but Angle reverses that into the ankle lock. Brock gets the rope but Angle pulls him back without the hold being broken. For some reason that's ok with the referee and Kurt switches it up to a half crab. Brock finally kicks Angle away and launches him out to the floor.

The champ hits a SWEET release German on Brock for two and the Angle Slam gets the same. Lesnar comes back with the Angle Slam for two of his own as the fans are getting way into this now. Back to the ankle lock by Kurt and he hooks the grapevine for good measure. Brock somehow makes it to

the rope, which I believe is the only time anyone has escaped the grapevine version of the ankle lock.

F5 is countered into a small package but the Angle Slam is countered into another F5 which connects for no cover. Instead Brock goes to the top rope for the famous spot of the match, as he completely botches a Shooting Star Press, landing square on his head. With Lesnar's brains somewhere in Bermuda, Angle covers for two. Lesnar stands up, hits another F5, and wins the title before heading off for medical attention. The gone look on Brock's face is terrifying.

**Rating:** B+. It's another very good match, but it's still not a masterpiece. The botch is the main thing that people remember but the match is still very good for the most part. Angle competing in this condition was freaking STUPID at the end of the day and it's no wonder that he's basically insane now. Very good match though and a good way to start Lesnar's second title reign.

Both guys stagger to their feet and hug to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A-. It's an excellent show but it's not as great as Mania 17. The opening stuff didn't work nearly as well as the main event stuff, but the biggest thing holding it back from greatness is the lack of THAT match. The most memorable thing about this show is the Shooting Star and that's because it was a botch. If that thing hit though, this is much higher because that's a huge Wrestlemania moment to put Lesnar way higher up in history. Still though, excellent show and well worth watching.

### Ratings Comparison

Matt Hardy vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Undertaker vs. A-Train/Big Show

Original: D

Redo: C

Trish Stratus vs. Victoria vs. Jazz

Original: D+

Redo: C

Los Guerreros vs. Team Angle vs. Chris Benoit/Rhyno

Original: C+

Redo: C

Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A-

Redo: A-

HHH vs. Booker T

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon

Original: B

Redo: D+

The Rock vs. Steve Austin

Original: B+

Redo: B+

Kurt Angle vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: A-

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: A-

What the heck was I thinking on that Hogan match?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/26/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-19-overrated/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Lucha Underground – March 4, 2015: Lucha! Lucha! Lucha!

## Lucha Underground

Date: March 4, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

Things are starting to get interesting around here again with the rises of Texano and Alberto to the main event scene, in addition to Cage fighting for the Lucha Underground Title. The big story tonight though is

Big Ryck vs. Sexy Star for the right to face the Crew later. This should be interesting as they could either do something unexpected or go the logical path by having Ryck end her with ease. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on Alberto and Texano bringing their feud from AAA to Lucha Underground. We also see clips of Mil Katrina leaving Mil Muertes for Fenix and the Crew going after Ryck and Sexy Star. In other words, it's a standard recap video for the main stories.

Alberto is in Cueto's office and the boss (the boss, not El Patron) offers him Ricky Mandell tonight. That goes nowhere so Cueto offers Famous B. Alberto wants Texano but Cueto wants more time to promote it. Patron gets in his face and demands Texano with the boss finally giving in. He doesn't have much of a backbone most of the time.

### Mil Muertes vs. Fenix

Muertes goes to meet him in the aisle but Fenix dives into a hurricanrana to take over. A big superkick sends Mil into the ring and a top rope legdrop gets two. That's enough selling for Muertes as he just erupts with right hands followed by a great looking TKO (always loved that move) for two.

We hit the chinlock for a few seconds before Catrina comes down the steps. Fenix comes back with a kick to the ribs and another to the leg, setting up a big corkscrew dive to the floor. Back in and Fenix slingshots through the ropes into a rolling cutter for two, only to go up top and get caught with a running Codebreaker of all things. The downward spiral is enough to pin Fenix.

**Rating:** C+. Fenix gets better every time I see him and Muertes is really good as a power guy. This is a pretty solid rivalry and it has the easy story of Catrina. Good stuff here and one of the better matches I've seen in a while on this show. That being said, I still want to impale Matt Striker on a thousand kendo sticks. His stupid nicknames for everything drive me insane.

Post match Catrina gets on the apron but won't do the (hashtag according to that nitwit Striker) Lick of Death. Muertes grabs her by the throat so

she drops the stone (some thing that means something to Muertes or whatever), only to have Fenix pick it up and lay Muertes out. Catrina gives Mil the Lick and kisses Fenix. Naturally the announcers act like they're in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and freak out.

We get a cool video on Konnan wanting revenge while standing in the ring. Nothing is said but the atmosphere is really cool. These videos are a highlight for the company as the production looks great.

Ivelisse tells Cueto that she should be #1 contender but Cueto says win it again, but with Son of Havoc as guest referee. That's kind of an odd stipulation.

Alberto tells Muertes to focus on Cage and to listen to Konnan. Keep that title warm though because he's coming for it.

#### Big Ryck vs. Sexy Star

Winner gets a three on one match with the Crew at some point in the future. Star goes after him and there's no effect. Ryck misses a charge though and a high cross body gets two. Star slaps him in the face so Ryck loads up the Rock Bottom, but lays her down softly and just holds the shoulders for the pin.

The Crew runs in for the beatdown and Star gets attacked as well. They start going after Ryck's eye but he explodes out of the corner and cleans house, sending the Crew running. Ryck as a face is interesting and could go somewhere if they just let him break people.

We get a really good video on Alberto, talking about his heritage in the business and how he's trying to live up to his father's success. He conquered America but their disrespect made him leave. That leave one dream: winning the AAA World Title, which he defeated Texano for back in December.

#### Alberto El Patron vs. Texano

Feeling out process to start with Texano nailing a shoulder and spitting on Alberto. El Patron knocks him out to the floor and Texano takes a



breather. Back in and Alberto grabs a hurricanrana followed by the corner enziguri as the fans are way into him. I can't blame them as he's a really good face most of the time.

Alberto telegraphs a backdrop worse than anyone I've ever seen and gets kicked in the face, only to send Texano to the floor for a big suicide dive. That's fine with Texano as he DDT's Alberto on the floor. We hit the chinlock (bad one too) for a bit before Texano dropkicks him out of the air for two. Alberto catches him on top with a superplex and both guys are down. They slug it out with Alberto taking over (like any good face should) and nailing a Backstabber for two.

The low superkick misses and Texano grabs a spinebuster. Texano puts him in a reverse Tree of Woe for some kicks to the back of the head, only to tear off a buckle pad to distract the referee so Texano can get in some bullrope shots. Alberto fights out of a superplex attempt and ties Texano in the ropes for a top rope double stomp. The armbreaker is countered into a Batista Bomb for two but Texano eats the low superkick for two. Texano grabs the bullrope (Striker: "The sandpaper snake!" Oh shut up already.), only to have Alberto take it away and whip the fire out of Texano for the DQ.

**Rating:** B. Really solid main event style match here with both guys beating the tar out of each other. Alberto looks like a star and I like Texano more every time I see him in the ring. I like that they're tying AAA into Lucha Underground as it helps this company and gives AAA a foot in the American door, which is nothing but good. Nice main event this week.

Cueto makes King Cuerno vs. Mundo in a cage for next week. Cool.

**Overall Rating:** B. This show is rapidly joining NXT as the best TV show in wrestling today. The wrestling is good, the stories make sense, everything seems to be going well and I want to see where things go. Good show this week and Alberto is the kind of big star this company needs to look more legit. That cage match sounds good too so there's a reason to come back, which is the most important thing a show can do.

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XVIII: Hogan's Apology

## Wrestlemania XVIII

Date: March 17, 2002

Location: SkyDome, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 68,237

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is a show where things have really changed a lot in a single year. The Attitude Era is over and the Invasion has come and thankfully gone. HHH is returning tonight to take the Undisputed Title which was supposed to be his in the first place but he wasn't back from injury yet. Instead it went to Chris Jericho, who knew his days were numbered the second HHH came back. The real main event here though is The Rock vs. Hulk Hogan, who returned with Hall and Nash last month. This is the point where a lot of the shows are fuzzy to me because a lot of the matches and feuds are just filler. Let's get to it.

Before the show Saliva performs Superstar. Eh I like the song so I can't complain. Also it's not like they're performing a rock version of America the Beautiful. That would just be stupid.

The opening video is about how Wrestlemania is the biggest show of the year and what it means for your career to make it to this show. The main focus is on HHH being back in the main event tonight.

#### Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. William Regal

Regal is defending and this is during his Power of the Punch period. Van Dam kicks him down to start before pounding away at the champion's head. The fans are all behind RVD here as Regal quickly loads up the brass knuckles. RVD is ready for it though and kicks the knuckles away. A nice jumping kick to the face takes Regal down again but a quick Five Star attempt misses.

The champion takes it to the mat for a bit before a quick suplex gets two. Regal puts on a quick chinlock but Van Dam flips out of it, only to hit knees with Rolling Thunder. A nice butterfly powerbomb gets two for Regal but Rob rolls him up before the Regal Stretch can go on. Van Dam monkey flips Regal down but Regal blocks the stepover kick into a half nelson suplex. Nicely done. Rob rolls to the floor and Regal follows, where he finds the brass knuckles. The referee takes them away back inside, but Regal pulls out a second pair. Not that it matters though as RVD kicks him down and hits the Five Star to win the title.

**Rating:** B-. Nice opener here with some solid strikes from Van Dam and even nicer counters by Regal. It's also a good feeling moment for the fans which should put them in a good mood for the rest of the show. That's what a good opener is supposed to do and it worked fine here. That's the first of Van Dam's six IC Titles over his career.

Christian talks about not needing DDP or this city anymore. Also he's totally over those temper tantrums of his.

#### European Title: Christian vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Christian is challenging and he cranks up the heel levels here by saying that he's now from Tampa instead of Toronto. Page is very POSITIVE at this point but he never worked in WWF. At the end of the day, Page grew up in front of the WCW cameras instead of the WWF ones, so there was no connection to the fans. He was just an old guy with a good finisher and

not much else.

Christian jumps Page to start but Page comes back with a nice over the shoulder gutbuster before clotheslining Christian out to the floor. Back in and Page pounds away in the corner, only to be dropped face first onto the buckle. We hear about Page being the Cadillac driver at Wrestlemania 6 in this same building which is indeed a pretty cool story. They trade slugs in the corner but Christian rams Page into the post to take over.

Back inside and Christian puts on an abdominal stretch followed by a backbreaker for two. Christian goes up top but gets slammed from the bottom rope (that's a new one) as Page takes over. The discus lariat and helicopter bomb get two each for the champion but the Cutter is blocked. Another attempt out of the corner is countered into the reverse DDT for two. Christian keeps himself calm though, only to walk into the Diamond Cutter to retain the title.

**Rating:** C. Not quite as good as the first match but it certainly wasn't bad. The problem here was the same one I mentioned earlier: there's really no reason to care about Page. He's not terrible but there's nothing about him that makes WWF fans interested in him. Christian was still several months (and a big haircut) away from meaning anything as a singles guy. Page would lose the title to Regal in two days and it would be retired in July.

Post match Page says that was a good thing but Christian has a tantrum anyway.

Rock says he wants Hulkamania to be running wild tonight. He asks Coach if he took his vitamins this morning. Coach did, but he was too busy to say his prayers. This doesn't sit well with Rock so he demands some prayers right now. Coach gets down on his knees. Coach: "What up G?" Rock: "WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU??? GET OUT OF HERE YOU SICK FREAK!" Rock says he's running wild on Hogan tonight and tears his own shirt off. He's feeling it tonight.

Hardcore Title: Goldust vs. Maven

Maven is defending and this is another match with no real story to it.

Goldie jumps him during the entrance to take over quickly. A forearm off the railing keeps Maven down and it's cookie sheet time. We head inside with Maven avoiding a catapult and hitting a kind of Van Daminator with a trashcan and dropkick for two. Goldie neckbreakers him down for two and busts out a shovel. Instead of using it though he whips Maven into the trashcan for two. Goldust puts Maven down with a shot to the head...and here's Spike Dudley running in for the pin and the title. We've got a running joke tonight and I'm not rating this nonsense.

Drowning Pool performs a song called Tear Away which "tells the story" of the main event, which means we get a small video of the feud as they play their song. This fills up like five minutes of the show, which combined with the other performance earlier could have easily gone to another match or extending one of the existing ones.

As could this, as in the back Crash and Spike are fighting again until Al Snow and a referee come up in a golf cart. He misses both guys fighting but here's Hurricane swinging in on a rope to kick Spike down and win the title.

After a don't try this at home video, we recap Hurricane winning the title. SERIOUSLY? On WRESTLEMANIA we're wasting time like this?

### Kurt Angle vs. Kane

Angle has the SWEET black singlet here. He rips on the Canadian figure skating team that had a big controversy over winning a gold medal. Angle says he's a big red white and blue machine but here's the interruption. If there's a reason for this match, it's not important enough to mention and I can't remember it either. Apparently there's something about Kane having a concussion so Angle hits him with the bell before the...uh bell actually.

A quick German suplex puts Kane down and Kurt stomps away. Kane gets up and hits some right hands before stomping away in the corner for a bit. A two handed chokeslam puts Angle down but he blocks the one armed version. Angle comes back with a belly to belly suplex for no cover but it scrambles Kane's head again. Kurt chokes away on the ropes and a belly to back suplex gets two. Off to a front facelock for a bit until Kane throws

Angle off to get a breather.

The side slam puts Kane down but Angle rolls some Germans to put him right back down. A top rope clothesline puts Kane down again but the second attempt lands on an uppercut from Kane. Both guys are down again as the match slows down even more. Kane comes back with the big boot and the tilt-a-whirl powerslam for two. Now the chokeslam hits but Angle grabs the rope. Angle grabs the mask to confuse Kane and hits the Angle Slam for two.

There's the ankle lock for a bit which has made Kane tap before, but he makes the rope this time. An enziguri puts Angle down and Kane goes up, only for Angle to run the ropes for the suplex. The Angle Slam is countered and Kane grabs a chokeslam, only for Angle to roll through into a cradle. They botch said cradle but Angle improvises by putting his feet on the ropes because he's smart like that.

**Rating:** C-. This was just kind of there which hurt it a lot. Again, I'm not really sure why these two were fighting. There was a mention of head trauma for Kane but that was never elaborated on at all. Also it didn't really seem to mess with Kane after the first two minutes or so, making it a pretty pointless injury. Not bad here, but it didn't do anything of note for me.

Hurricane tries to sneak out of the building but winds up seeing Godfather's escorts changing clothes. Erection jokes are made using a broom. This isn't funny.

We recap Undertaker vs. Flair. Flair cost Taker a match against Rock at No Way Out for reasons not clear, so Taker demanded a match here tonight. Flair said no so Taker beat up Arn Anderson and Flair's son David. The Board made Flair step down as a result. Vince made this No DQ to be a jerk.

### Ric Flair vs. Undertaker

Flair goes straight for him to start and takes it to the floor immediately, sending Taker over the announce table to pound away. Back in and Flair punches Undertaker out to the floor where he's staggering

around. Taker sends him into the barricade to put him down though and we head back inside. We get the Flair Flip in the corner and then a second one that sends Flair out to the floor.

Taker pounds him down by the timekeeper's table, busting Ric open in the process. Back in and Taker kicks him in his bloody head for good measure. Taker pounds away in the corner but Flair comes back with some HARD chops. There's blood on the camera as Undertaker knocks Flair right back down. A pretty awesome superplex puts Flair down but Undertaker pulls him up at two because he's EVIL. Taker hits a hard elbow to Flair's head before dropping the apron legdrop.

Back in and Flair pulls him up again before pounding away at Naitch's head. Flair avoids an elbow drop though and counters Old School for good measure. Undertaker is bleeding from the cheek. A side slam stops Flair's comeback dead for two and we're right back where we were a minute ago. They head out to the floor where Flair pulls a lead pipe off of Taker's bike and blasts him in the forehead with it. A shot to the ribs has Taker in trouble again and his head is busted open on top of that.

Flair finds a Keep Off sign and blasts Taker with it a few times as we head back inside. Taker grabs him by the throat but Flair kicks him in his old dead balls to break it up. Off to the Figure Four but Taker grabs him by the throat to escape. The chokeslam gets two so Taker shoves the referee down. He grabs the pipe again but here's Arn Anderson with a spinebuster for two. Taker LAUNCHED Flair out on the kickout too.

Anderson comes in and gets busted open via some shots to the head and is put in a dragon sleeper (yes Taker used to use that) for good measure. Flair breaks it up with a chair but gets kicked in the face. They botch the Last Ride attempt (it almost looked like Flair was sandbagging him) so Taker Tombstones him to end it.

**Rating:** C. Just a long punching match here for the most part which wasn't all that good. Anderson was a nice sight to see but it didn't do much to help Flair. The problem with Taker at this point was that he wouldn't sell ANYTHING and it made Flair look all the weaker in the process. So naturally they made him world champion in like two months.

Booker T (wearing glasses for some reason) says he's smart because he's wearing glasses. He claims to have aced the SAT and won an award for a paper on Einstein's Theory of Relativity. "He had two theories." After tonight, Edge can endorse a book about getting beaten up by Booker T. This was the semi-infamous "THEY'RE FIGHTING OVER SHAMPOO!" feud, where Edge stole a Japanese shampoo endorsement deal from Booker. It may sound stupid, but you can't say it's been done.

### Booker T vs. Edge

Booker gets in a cheap shot to start but the hometown boy comes back with a dropkick and half nelson mat slam for two. A hot shot puts Edge down again though as JR talks about government officials that are interested in Mania. Edge gets clotheslined out to the floor and stomped a bit before we head back inside. A missile dropkick gets two on Edge as this is still all Booker. There's a spinebuster for the same but Booker goes up and gets crotched, allowing Edge to botch a top rope rana to put Booker down.

Back up and Edge hits some clotheslines followed by the Edge-0-Matic for two. Edge counters Booker's corner sunset flip into a catapult but misses the spear. There's a superkick to put Edge down and it's Spinarooni time. Edge hits a fast spear for two and does a Spinarooni of his own. The Edgecution hits and we're done.

**Rating:** D+. The match sucked but the fans loved it that Edge came back home and won. That being said, this shows one of the major problems with this show: so many of the matches could have been aired on Raw but instead they're airing on Wrestlemania. They don't feel big and that's a bad thing.

Hurricane insists he's not a pervert but Mighty Molly hits him with a frying pan for the pin and the title.

We recap Vince bringing in the NWO. They cost Austin the title at No Way Out so Austin toyed with them for awhile, including kidnapping Hall. This resulted in the NWO breaking a cinder block over Austin's knee and it hurt him so bad that he taped up the OTHER knee and limped on it for two weeks.



## Steve Austin vs. Scott Hall

That's a pretty big fall for Austin from main event to this in just a year. The injured Nash is with Hall here to try to make us believe Austin isn't winning in a walk. Austin immediately stomps him down in the corner before Hall can even get his vest off. There's the Thesz Press but Austin has to go after Nash on the floor instead of following up. Back in and Hall clotheslines him down for two as momentum shifts. Nash sneaks a turnbuckle pad off as the other two fight in the corner.

Austin gets whipped back first into said buckle pad and Nash adds a right hand for good measure. The fallaway slam gets two for Hall as does a hard clothesline. Hall stomps away at Austin's ribs and Nash gets in another right hand to the head. Scott pounds away even more but Austin grabs a Stunner out of nowhere. Nash makes the save and decks the referee though, allowing for some good old NWO cheating.

Hall brings in a chair but Austin easily beats them both up and gives them both Stunners. No referee though but we get a replacement, only for Nash to drop an elbow on his back. The Outsider's Edge is broken up and Hall is backdropped out to the floor. A bunch of referees come out to eject Nash as Hall sends Austin into the exposed buckle and hits a Stunner of his own (good one too) for two. Austin gets up and they do the EXACT same sequence but switch the people, allowing Austin to hit two Stunners to win it.

**Rating:** C. Again, much like everything else tonight, this was just a match. There was very little heat on this even though it was one of the better matches of the night. The big problem with most of these matches is that none of them feel special and that's the case here. I mean....Austin vs. Scott Hall? Maybe four years ago, but in 2002? That doesn't blow my skirt up.

Axxess video. That still looks awesome.

Tag Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck vs. APA

Saliva plays the Dudleyz to the ring which gives us the VERY nice image of Stacy in the Dudley attire dancing to the song. I've always thought

she never looked better than she did in those outfits. Billy and Chuck are defending and this is elimination rules. Bradshaw jumps Chuck to start but Billy saves him from the fallaway slam. Instead it's Billy taking it as it's all Bradshaw so far.

A big belly to back suplex puts Chuck down again and it's off to Faarooq. The crowd is eerily silent for this. Chuck clips Faarooq in the jaw with a right hand and it's off to Billy for some choking. Billy loads up the Fameasser but gets caught in a wicked powerslam. Back to Bradshaw as things break down a bit. Billy tags in D-Von but the APA breaks up a 3D attempt. Faarooq hits a spinebuster on Chuck on the floor and there's the big Clothesline to Billy, but Bradshaw walks into the 3D for the elimination.

The Hardys and Dudleys start fighting for old times' sake before Matt and Jeff start beating on Chuck. The Dudleys load up a table but the Hardys dive on them to slow it up. Back in and there's the Whisper in the Wind to Bubba. Stacy gets up on the apron and pulls up her shorts to distract Jeff, only to get spanked and kissed. A Bubba Bomb slows down Billy before Bubba chokes on Jeff with his shirt.

Things finally calm down a bit until we get to Jeff vs. Bubba again. With D-Von's help, Bubba manages a backdrop to put Jeff down again and puts on a chinlock. D-Von comes in and runs over Jeff before pounding away in the corner. A belly to back suplex gets two and it's back to Bubba. Having a regular tag match between these two is probably the best idea given how lame Billy and Chuck were in the ring. Bubba stands on Jeff's crotch in the Tree of Woe before tagging in D-Von for some choking.

A clothesline by Jeff allows for the hot tag to Matt, only to see him immediately run over by Bubba. The backsplash misses of course though and Matt tries to speed it up a bit, only to get caught in What's Up. Before D-Von can dive though, the champions remember they're in this too and shove D-Von through the table on the floor. Matt pops up and it's the Twist into the Swanton for the pin on Bubba, leaving us with Billy and Chuck against the Hardys.

A Side Effect puts Billy down and there's Poetry in Motion for good

measure. Chuck gets the same along with a Twist of Fate. Jeff adds in the Swanton but Billy sneaks in with a Fameasser on Jeff but Chuck can only get two off o it. Instead it's a belt shot to Jeff's head for the pin by Chuck to FINALLY end this.

**Rating:** D. This was only thirteen minutes long but MAN ALIVE was this a chore to sit through. There was no need for this to be on the card and everyone from the commentators to the fans had no interest in it. The only good thing about this was how insanely hot Stacy looked. This could have easily been cut and made this already bloated show a bit easier to sit through.

The Outsiders want to beat up Rock to make up for Austin, but Hogan calls them off because he needs to do this by himself. The Outsiders aren't sure about that but they agree...until Hogan leaves.

Molly tries to leave but gets hit in the face by a door to give Christian the title.

We recap Hogan vs. Rock, which is the real main event of this show. Hogan talked about how he was a legend but then the people turned on him. Rock came out and said that it was Hogan that changed rather than the people. He said Hogan had talked about main headlining Wrestlemania after Wrestlemania, so how does he feel about headlining one more Wrestlemania against the Rock. Hogan said yes and got a Rock Bottom for his trouble.

Then a week later, Hogan hit Rock in the back of the head with a hammer and put him in an ambulance which he then rammed with a semi-truck. Since this is 2002 and one of the dumbest years ever in wrestling, Rock was back the next week. It's one of those moments that was really REALLY stupid and not needed at all.

### Hollywood Hogan vs. The Rock

Both guys get solid pops as this is an old WWF city, which means Hogan could set fire to a kitten orphanage and still be popular. The pre match chants seem to favor Hulk, but here are some Rock fans to counter them. They stare at each other and there's the loudest pop for an opening bell I can remember. Hogan shoves him down to start and the fans go NUTS. You

can tell Hogan is feeling it here. After a quick headlock Hogan runs him over and poses, sending the crowd further into a frenzy.

A clothesline puts Rock down as the crowd is almost completely one sided. Rock comes back with a jumping clothesline and the fans boo him out of the freaking building. Rock says just bring it and knocks Hogan to the floor with some right hands. Back in and Rock loads up the Rock Bottom but Hogan escapes and elbows out of it. He rakes his boot over Rock's eyes to another big pop. There's another big HOGAN chant for good measure.

A belly to back suplex gets two for Hulk and there's an abdominal stretch for good measure. Hulk even adds in a rollup for two before raking Rock's back. Rock escapes and comes back with some chops in the corner but walks into a chokeslam of all things from Hulk. He sends Rock out to the floor as this is still almost one sided so far. Rock goes face first into the steps and dropped on the barricade for good measure.

Hogan starts loading up the announce table but Rock fights back with right hands. Rock gets a chair but the referee takes it away, allowing Hogan to clothesline Rock down. Back inside and Rock is sent into the referee. Rock comes back with a lame spinebuster and the Sharpshooter. Hulk makes the rope but there's no referee. Rock pulls him to the middle of the ring but there's still no referee.

The fans just lay into Rock now with the Rocky Sucks chants as he checks on the referee. Hogan hits him low though and gets a pretty freaking good Rock Bottom for two. Hogan takes off his weightlifting belt to whip Rock's back but Rock comes back with a DDT. There's the Rock Bottom but Hogan HULKS UP. The fans absolutely lose their minds now as Hogan shakes his finger and hits the big boot, but the legdrop only gets two. Another big boot hits but the second legdrop misses. There's the Rock Bottom again and a third for good mesaure. Rock nips up and hits the People's Elbow to end it.

**Rating:** B. This is a hard one to grade but I think it's a lot like the Hogan vs. Warrior match in the same building: the crowd carries it to a much higher level than it deserves to be at which is just fine. The crowd

was completely eating up the nostalgia and there's nothing at all wrong with that. Hogan would get one of the longest ovations in history the next night in Montreal and those two reactions were enough to put the world title on him for a month soon after this. It wasn't the best idea in the world, but given those reactions I can understand why they did it. This was a very fun match and should have been the main event.

Post match they stare each other down with Hogan holding his ribs. Hogan extends his hand and Rock gladly shakes it. Hulk lets Rock pose but here are the Outsiders. They yell at Hogan and beat him down, but Rock runs back in for the save. Hall and Nash are dispatched and Rock and Hogan stand tall, apparently having made up after Hogan HIT ROCK WITH A HAMMER AND CRUSHING HIM WITH A SEMITRUCK. Rock has Hogan pose for the fans after the match in another nostalgia moment.

Big Show is at WWF New York.

We get the attendance record announcement: 68,237, breaking the record (presumably) held by Wrestlemania VI by about 600 people.

#### Women's Title: Jazz vs. Lita vs. Trish Stratus

Jazz is defending as these three get the death spot after that last match. Trish looks GREAT in a Canadian Maple Leaf themed outfit as the hometown girl. Jazz gets double teamed to start as you can hear the crowd not caring at all. Jazz comes back almost immediately with a half crab on Trish and the double chickenwing on Lita. A kick to Trish's ample chest sends her out to the floor but Lita pounds on the champion to take over.

A Cena spinning powerbomb gets two on Jazz but she isn't interested in being on defense that long. She loads Lita up for a superplex but Trish breaks it up with an electric chair for two. All three are back in now and Lita gets a weak clothesline to put Jazz down. Trish loads up Stratusfaction but Jazz breaks it up and gets two off a splash on Lita. A release fisherman's suplex gets two on Trish as Jerry lists off countries the show is airing in. Jazz is knocked to the floor so we can have the brawl that people actually care about.

A bad looking backdrop puts Trish down but Jazz comes back in, only to

walk into the Twist of Fate. Lita teases taking her top off but tries a moonsault instead, only hitting Trish's knees. Trish chops at Lita but they collide coming out of the corner. Lita sends Jazz to the floor and breaks up a Stratusfaction attempt by sending Trish to the floor. Lita goes up but gets crotched, allowing Jazz to hit a fisherman's buster off the middle rope on Lita to retain.

**Rating:** D-. Trish looked great and Lita wasn't bad either, but DEAR GOODNESS no one cared about Jazz. For the life of me I don't get why Trish didn't win the title here. She would eventually take the title off Jazz in like a month. On Raw. In Toronto. You know, not HERE AT WRESTLEMANIA IN TORONTO.

Maven jumps Christian as he leaves and steals the title again, finally ending this stupid joke.

#### WWF World Title: HHH vs. Chris Jericho

HHH won the Rumble to get this show. Drowning Pool does HHH's entrance and it SUCKS. That's meant to be an old school rock song, not a bad metal version. The big story here is that HHH got tired of his wife Stephanie being all annoying and saying she could do whatever she wanted because anyone that opposed her would have to deal with HHH so he yelled at her, sending her over to Jericho. If you actually believe Jericho has anything resembling a chance here, I feel sorry for you. He does get a face pop though. Oh and HHH's repaired quad is "hanging by a thread".

Stephanie starts screeching as soon as the bell rings. Jericho takes him to the corner to start and bends the leg around the rope to a bit of an effect. HHH fires back with some right hands and the fans don't seem to care. A backdrop puts Jericho down as does a clothesline. HHH comes back with the jumping knee to the face but hurts the bad leg in the process.

Jericho hits a backdrop to send HHH to the outside as they're getting close to plodding territory. The champion spends too much time posing and is sent into the barricade for his troubles. A suplex on the floor lays out Jericho but HHH takes too much time loading up the announce table, allowing the champion to kick the bad leg out. Back inside now and HHH gets all CEREBRAL BABY and goes after Jericho's leg.

After a good look at Stephanie's rocking cleavage, there's a figure four by HHH. Stephanie digs her nails into HHH's eyes to break it up though, causing HHH to go after her. Jericho charges into Stephanie by mistake and into the ring she goes. HHH loads up the Pedigree on his wife but Jericho hits a missile dropkick to break it up. HHH's leg is wrapped around the post a few times and Stephanie kicks him in the leg for good measure.

Back in again and Jericho cranks on the leg. The match isn't bad so far but it's doing nothing to draw my interest. The leg is wrapped around the post again and there's the Figure Four around the post (on the correct leg and everything!) for good measure. Back in and HHH is taken down to the mat to stop a comeback bid before Jericho puts on an Indian Deathlock. HHH finally kicks Jericho away, sending him shoulder first into the post.

There's a neckbreaker to Chris but he's up first anyway. A clothesline gets two for HHH as Stephanie cheers for Jericho. The facebuster puts HHH down but he hurts his own leg again. The spinebuster gets two for HHH but Jericho is still up first. HHH is sent over the corner and out to the floor where Jericho loads up the announce table again. Jericho tries to put him in the Walls on the announce table ala the night HHH tore his quad but HHH fights out. Instead he loads up a Pedigree but Jericho backdrops him through the other table.

Back in and Jericho hits the Lionsault for two and there are the Walls for good measure. Jericho pulls him away from the ropes so HHH crawls again to make them. Stephanie offers a distraction so Jericho can bring in a chair but HHH counters with a DDT onto said chair. The crowd is DEAD for this. Stephanie comes in for no apparent reason and we finally get to see HHH Pedigree her. A chair shot to the head puts HHH down for two so Jericho loads up a Pedigree of his own. That gets countered into a slingshot and the real Pedigree gives HHH the title back.

**Rating:** C+. The match itself was ok but the crowd really drags it down. The problem with this match is that it went on after EVERYTHING else tonight and everyone is so freaking tired that no one cared. It didn't help that HHH might have been a more obvious winner than Austin four

years ago so we had to sit through 19 minutes until we got to the clear finish. The match itself was nothing special either. It was Jericho kicking him in the leg for the whole match before HHH escaped the Walls and hitting the Pedigree to win it. The match isn't bad, but it's completely lacking anything memorable.

HHH celebrates to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. FINALLY this is over. This is a show that collapsed under its own weight. Nothing on here other than Rock vs. Hogan is memorable at all and even worse, nothing else felt like it belonged at Wrestlemania. The show was lacking the emotion that it needed and you could tell the crowd wasn't interested. It certainly isn't a horrible show, but it's dying to have about 45 minutes cut off. Do that and this is WAY easier to sit through. There's a very big difference between something being bad and something being dull, and this was much more on the dull side.

#### Ratings Comparison

Rob Van Dam vs. William Regal

Original: C

Redo: B-

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian

Original: D+

Redo: C

Maven vs. Goldust

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Kurt Angle vs. Kane

Original: C+



Redo: C-

Undertaker vs. Ric Flair

Original: B

Redo: C

Edge vs. Booker T

Original: C

Redo: D+

Steve Austin vs. Scott Hall

Original: D

Redo: C

Billy and Chuck vs. APA vs. Dudley Boys vs. Hardy Boys

Original: F

Redo: D

Rock vs. Hollywood Hogan

Original: C+

Redo: B

Jazz vs. Trish Stratus vs. Lita

Original: F+

Redo: D-

HHH vs. Chris Jericho

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C

Redo: C-

I went back and forth a lot on that one but it still came out about the same. That's interesting.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/25/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-18-should-have-been-hogan-vs-austin/>

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And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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## Monday Night Raw – March 16, 2015: It's Too Late

### Monday Night Raw

Date: March 16, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

There are just two weeks to go before Wrestlemania and the big question tonight is what happens between Randy Orton and Seth Rollins. Last week

Orton officially snapped and destroyed Rollins to end the show, meaning it's time for Rollins to retaliate. Other than that, we're fully in the build mode to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We open with clips of Orton's sitdown interview with Michael Cole from Smackdown where he explained his actions last week. Tonight he plans on challenging Rollins for Wrestlemania. Maybe after that he can challenge the writers to put together a story that isn't full of holes.

The Authority is in the ring and Seth doesn't look pleased. We're in Iowa so he's a hero this week. Rollins says last week was a betrayal at the hands of Randy Orton. This is nothing like what he did to the Shield because that was a sound business decision. Orton conned his way back into the Authority and made fools out of everyone, including HHH and Stephanie. Oh dang he's done then. Seth yells at Big Show for welcoming Orton back but Show says Orton was cruel last week. He can crush Orton because he's a giant. Thank goodness they're just spelling it out now.

Kane promises to hurt Orton too. Noble: "Seth, I know I'm considered the secret weapon of the Authority." Rollins' reaction is great as his eyes shift back and forth. Noble and Mercury want to get rid of Orton too and Rollins says Orton has never dealt with anyone like him. Seth accepts the challenge for Wrestlemania, but Orton has to face him tonight first. Cue Randy to accept the challenge and promises he has enough venom for all of the Authority. A beatdown tonight would make hurting Rollins at Wrestlemania so much sweeter. These fifteen minute speeches to set up a match kill my interest in the show. Just get on with it already.

### AJ Lee vs. Nikki Bella

Non-title. The Bellas get an inset before the match. "Give Divas a chance? Give us a break." Nikki drives shoulders into the corner to start but stops to do some push-ups. AJ grabs an armbar for a bit before taking Nikki to the apron with a headscissors. We take a break and come back with AJ getting taken down by an armbar. Nikki sends her shoulder first into the buckle as the announcers talk about Booker's wife and the View. This has nothing to do with the match but that goes without saying when it comes to commentary.

AJ comes back with a guillotine choke but gets driven into the corner again. A high cross body gets two on the champ but she plants AJ with a facebuster for the same. Nikki sends her out to the floor but Paige stops Brie from interfering. Brie posts Paige as a result, leaving Nikki to hit her forearm, and the Rack Attack for the completely clean pin at 11:00.

**Rating:** C+. This was better as the girls are easily more entertaining (most of the time) when they get more time. However, this match was another example of why the Divas have a major issue with getting to where their male counterparts are: their looks. When you have Nikki Bella in skin tight shorts and Brie showing off her well toned abs and AJ and Paige both being great looking, it's hard to base a match on its merits. That's not a knock on the girls as they all look great. It's just distracting to look at and takes away from what I'm supposed to be focusing on.

We look at Mark Henry yelling at Roman Reigns on Smackdown and getting laid out with a Superman Punch.

Kane and Big Show argue over who is going to deal with Orton. Rollins comes in and yells at them but Kane says the giants liked seeing Orton beat him down last week. Kane allowed him to win Money in the Bank, so he won't be in Seth's corner tonight. Show stares at Rollins but doesn't say anything.

### Ryback vs. Miz

Rematch from Smackdown where Ryback won. We get an inset interview where Miz says Mizdow will help him win the battle royal or else. Miz stomps away in the corner to start but Ryback takes him to the floor and tells Mizdow to hit his boss, only to have Miz fight out and yell at Mizdow. Back in and the spinebuster sets up the Meat Hook and Shell Shock to give Ryback the pin at 1:57.

Mizdow helps Miz up post match but eats the Skull Crushing Finale.

Video on Cena choking Rusev out last week to earn another US Title match.

Sheamus return video. I'm assuming he's back at Wrestlemania.

It's time for a contract signing between Cena and Rusev. Cena comes out first and soaks up the dueling chants. He calls this the most important contract he's ever signed before because he's up against someone who has never met a challenge he hasn't overcome. Rusev is the champion of the United States, meaning he represents each and every one of the fans. That's what makes the match so important.

Cena can beat Rusev up all he wants but it doesn't matter as long as Rusev has that title. It's disrespectful that Rusev represents a country they all call home and the fans chant USA. Cena goes all patriotic and says Wrestlemania is the revolution. Does that make him James Storm? You can only push the US so far before they rise up. Cena signs so Cole brings out Rusev, who is minus Lana but with what looks like a lawyer. Fans: "WE WANT LANA!"

The lawyer says Rusev isn't signing and shows us a clip of Stephanie (of course) saying only Rusev can make the match. We then see Lana making the match and JBL just unloads on the lawyer for the worst Russian accent of all time. Rusev has to be allowed to read a full statement with no interference from Cena in order for the match to be made. The statement is about America being obsessed with embracing failures and there goes Cena's hat. He mocks the Star Spangled Banner and Cena is about to erupt. Rusev signs and turns the table over before running. The Russian flag comes down for good measure.

#### New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Non-title with Woods on the floor. Kidd and Cesaro's inset interview show them doing a clapping routine ala New Day while saying fact over and over. That might be the best thing I've ever seen. Los Matadores come out to watch. Natalya is looking GREAT here in a full body leather suit. Big E. throws Kidd around to start before it's off to Cesaro vs. Kofi. Cesaro quickly swings him but stops when the referee points at Kidd for some reason. Trouble in Paradise nails Kidd but Cesaro uppercuts Kofi in the back of the head for the pin at 1:52. That was a really messy ending and I'm not sure what happened.

Post match Woods gets into it with Los Matadores but eats the

Neutralizer. Los Matadores beat down Cesaro and stand alto.

We look at Undertaker's lightning striking Bray's chair last week.

Rollins tells the Stooges he needs them there tonight. Noble says Rollins told them to get out last week and kind of stands up to Seth, earning him a slap to his face. Jamie thinks Rollins is getting full of himself and that briefcase so Rollins is about to fire him. That doesn't happen because Jamie quits and Mercury walks off with him. I really hope those two stick around as they're on fire at the moment.

We get a sitdown interview with Brock where he says he's on this planet to hurt people. That may be sadistic but he enjoys it. Wrestlemania means getting to beat people up on a big stage. Undertaker had no chance of beating him and he loved seeing people shocked. As for his contract with WWE, if he stays, he'll be WWE Champion. On the other hand, if he goes, he'll be WWE Champion.

As a rookie, he sent Rock to Hollywood. Then he ended the Streak. Then he knocked John Cena out of the main event. If you think Brock was crazy in hunting mode, wait until you see him in defense mode. He says he's going to censored up Roman Reigns at Wrestlemania and walks off. Bringing up the contract idea is interesting and makes me think something is up. Side note: Brock isn't known for his talking, but he's miles ahead of Reigns on the mic.

### Big Show vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan's entrance was after a break but I had his name typed in before we came back. How did I know? Because who else was going to be in this spot? Serious question. Who else was going to be in that spot? Rowan is Big Show's official whipping boy and there was almost no one else that was going to lose here.

There's no match anyway as Big Show destroys him before the bell and hits the KO, setting up a middle rope elbow.

Larry Zbyszko Hall of Fame video. They're starting to stretch for names, though there are worse names than Larry.

Kane and a bunch of midcarders in the Andre battle royal are in the ring with Kane offering to demonstrate why he's going to win. This brings out Mark Henry to throw his hat in. A brawl breaks out with Axel sneaking to the floor and standing next to the trophy. We wind up with Kane and Henry with Mark throwing Kane to the floor. Axel sneaks in and tries to dump Mark, only to get tossed with ease. That's a lot better than he did last week.

Here's Heyman with something to say. He talks about Lesnar being the most legitimately dominant champion in the history of WWE or MMA. Lesnar is a warrior and a conqueror, who is bringing a club to Wrestlemania to dominate Roman Reigns. If Lesnar destroys Reigns, are they going to just cut the feed? Are they going to refund the money? WWE is stuck with Lesnar as WWE Champion...and there goes the mic.

Heyman thinks it's funny because Reigns is going to get destroyed and turned into the next great Samoan American't. He keeps saying you can't over and over again until Reigns comes out with an "I can and I will" shirt. Reigns says this is between himself and Lesnar. He isn't coming into this expecting a fairy tale. Reigns is hoping for a fight but expects a war. All those family members of his will carry him out, but they'll carry him out as champion.

We recap Orton, Rollins and the Stooges earlier.

Stardust/Bad News Barrett/Luke Harper vs. Daniel Bryan/Dolph Ziggler/Dean Ambrose

Truth comes out with the title hanging from his back like a backpack. Dean beats up Stardust to start before it's quickly off to Daniel for some forearms. The surfboard makes Stardust scream and Ziggler knocks him outside as we take a break. Back with Barrett working on Ziggler in the corner and elbowing him in the jaw for two.

Off to Harper for some choking with the boot before it's back to Barrett, who misses the running boot in the corner. Harper is smart enough to clear out Dolph's partners but the powerbomb is countered again. Has Ziggler been training with Kidman? Everything breaks down and Harper's big boot and Batista Bomb get two as we take another break. We come back

with Ziggler countering Wasteland with a DDT.

Truth talks about being lucky like a rabbit's foot. Is he supposed to sound like Mike Tyson? The hot tag brings in Bryan and everything breaks down. Ambrose tags himself in and beats up Stardust, only to get kicked by Harper. Dolph kicks Bryan by mistake before kicking Harper as well. Barrett Wastelands Dolph onto his partners but Barrett counters the Bull Hammer into Wasteland for the pin at 17:00.

**Rating:** C+. This was a long tag match that helped set up more of the drama, but at the end of the day, these matches don't mean much when you're going into a ladder match. At least Truth is still funny on commentary and they've cut out the stupid stealing the title schtick. Good match here.

Truth gets caught with the belt and Stardust runs off with it into the crowd. Ambrose takes it back but drops it at ringside, allowing Truth to pick it up again. Harper gets in his face so Truth throws it inside. Bryan and Ziggler get in a fight until Harper interferes, allowing Barrett to Bull Hammer everyone and take the belt. Truth eats a Bull Hammer for good measure.

Rollins goes in to see the Authority but Stephanie tells him to fix this himself. Seth asks when HHH is going to stop hiding from Sting but Stephanie tells him to man up.

Bray Wyatt talks about Abigail warning him about the evils of the world, including someone like Undertaker. Undertaker tried to use the urn to burn fear into his heart. Bray pours the ashes out of the urn as he talks about Undertaker's spirit being broken last year. That opened the eyes of the world and took away the Undertaker's destiny. No one is safe at Wrestlemania.

### Randy Orton vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins stops on the stage to say it took Orton three weeks to make the Authority look like fools, yet it only took three hours for Rollins to make a fool out of him. Cue the full Authority so Orton wisely goes to get a chair. The ring is surrounded as the fans want Sting. That's



exactly what they get too as Sting appears and helps clean house with the bat to a BIG ovation from the crowd. The Stooges take finishers

**Overall Rating:** C+. They're firmly in last minute build mode here and this show helped, but it's WAY too late to really make this show work. At the end of the day, Wrestlemania can't be built up like any other show and if you try to do it that way, things just aren't going to work. Reigns is fitting in well with the "yes I can" bit, but I have little faith in WWE to stick with that all the way until Wrestlemania.

The wrestling was better this week with the Divas looking good and the long tag match working, but those matches are more than set already. That's the problem with this point in time: everything is already set, so what is there left to do on these shows other than kill time? This was better than the previous weeks but still nothing great.

### Results

Nikki Bella b. AJ Lee – Rack Attack

Ryback b. Miz – Shell Shock

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd b. New Day – Uppercut to Kingston

Dean Ambrose/Dolph Ziggler/Daniel Bryan b. Luke Harper/Bad News Barrett/Stardust – Dirty Deeds to Barrett

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# Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – March 16, 2015

There are three weeks to go before Wrestlemania and the big question is simple: will anyone dare insult the memory of Andre the Giant, thereby ticking off the company's top villain and having Stephanie rip them to shreds in a segment that has nothing to do with what's going on at the moment and only serves to get Stephanie TV time? Let's get to it.

We crank up the stupid right off the bat this week as Orton and the Authority opened the show. Here's the REALLY short version of what happened: Orton threatened them, told them his plan to get revenge on Rollins, said he was kidding, and then, through a series of very convenient coincidences, carried out his plan later in the night and destroyed Rollins to end the show.

Does this company have any idea how to even do the most basic stories correctly these days? Randy Orton is a psycho, he comes back and hurts Rollins, Seth wants revenge at Wrestlemania. Or Orton comes back nice and calm, says he's seen the error of his ways, infiltrates the Authority and takes them out one by one before it's only Orton vs. Rollins at Wrestlemania.

Instead, this is what we get: Orton returns as a psycho, calms down and infiltrates the Authority (thanks to Stephanie yelling at him because that's the ultimate power in WWE), tells them their plan, gets lucky that Stephanie ejected Big Show and Kane earlier in the night, then beats Rollins to a pulp, leaving almost no logical reason to set up the match at Wrestlemania and giving us no reason to have a match without a gimmick, which we'll likely get anyway.

This whole story has been a mess because they don't seem to know what they want to do. It's a simple idea of just setting up an idea and then executing it. Look at this Reviewing the Review. I knew what I wanted to

do with it and then started writing it out. I didn't start talking about Raw, break into a recipe for how to baste a turkey, talk about Raw some more and then end by pasting the third act of the script to Con Air. Just please WWE, stop making up these stories week by week and then thinking trying to fill in the gaps in your horrible logic after you're done.

Daniel Bryan beat Bad News Barrett and Dean Ambrose beat Stardust in your Intercontinental Title shenanigans of the week. They've finally calmed down with the stealing the title and just let the people fight each other, which calms me down quite a bit. The wrestling was nothing to see but what do you expect with two matches not combining to last fifteen minutes?

Connor the Crusher is getting the Warrior Award at the Hall of Fame. If you don't smile at this at least a little bit....eh I've got nothing here. You should like it.

Heyman and Lesnar came out to say the exact same things they've said for two months. There's no reason for these guys to be fighting other than Reigns won the Rumble. They might have something with Reigns just doing what people says he can't, but we're WAY too late for that to work. It also doesn't help when it's a gladiator doing what other gladiators can't do, but at least it's something.

Big Show knocked out Kane by mistake (this is different than the time a few weeks ago when he knocked him out on Smackdown and it was never mentioned again) for a loss to Ryback and Rowan. Somehow they've linked Survivor Series to the Andre battle royal. That's just impressive.

Mizdow rapped about Miz. This wasn't funny.

Wiz Khalifa rapped. This wasn't funny or necessary.

The Bellas made Flintstones puns about themselves. This wasn't funny, necessary, or anything but a way for me to extend this bit to a third entry.

AJ pinned Summer in a match that accomplished nothing, other than allowing me to look at Summer Rae.

“Sting” narrated a video about his match with HHH. I’ve listened to Sting talk for 25 years and I’ve never heard him talk like that.

Cena yelled at the Russians and told them to respect America. Rusev then beat Curtis Axel in 26 seconds. Axel didn’t get to do his schtick and was completely destroyed. In other words, this was WWE getting annoyed that someone got over with a clever idea and made sure to crush (see what I did there?) him right before our eyes.

The big story here was that Cena came out and massacred Rusev, quickly putting him in the STF and knocking him out before doing it again and making him tap. The only way he let it go was for Lana to give him a US Title shot. Rusev yelled at Lana, sending her to the set of some movie. Rusev could be in major trouble but we’ll get to see how strong he is on his own.

Tyson Kidd and Cesaro lost because they’re champions. What makes it even worse is they lost to New Day, who I like but their momentum is dead. This transitioned into Naomi beating Natalya and Los Matadores beating the Usos. We’re probably getting a four way at Wrestlemania, or at least we would have if Jey hadn’t busted his shoulder.

Bray Wyatt had the urn and talked a lot until Undertaker sent lightning to set Bray’s chair on fire and make their match official. This was fine.

Reigns beat Orton and Rollins to set up Orton’s beatdown on Rollins.

This show was better than last week’s, but it’s still just another entry in a really bad build to Wrestlemania. At the end of the day, they have no focus and it’s showing more and more every week. Look at the Orton story again. He was angry, then he was calm, then they went with angry again. Pick something and go with it, just like they need to do in the main event feud. This week was indeed better, and a lot of that was due to less talking. Fight already.

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