

# Monday Night Raw – May 2, 2016: The New Era Of Greatest Hits

## Monday Night Raw

Date: May 2, 2016

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're past Payback, meaning we have less than three weeks before Extreme Rules with a main event of AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns II for the World Title. The big story tonight though is the balance of power as Shane and Stephanie McMahon will be running the show together for the foreseeable future. I'm sure this will be fascinating. Let's get to it.

This week's recap, narrated for a change, talks about last night's main event and the announcement of Shane and Stephanie sharing power.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie, carrying a present, to get things going. Before she can get anywhere though, here's Shane with 100% less presents. The bickering starts early but Stephanie's gift is for Shane. It's....the the picture of Vince holding Shane as a child that was broken up before Wrestlemania.

Before Shane can talk about his ideas for the night, here's Kevin Owens to interrupt things. He has an idea of his own: a rematch for the Intercontinental Title. Owens appeals to Stephanie's business sense and mentions having a contractually obligated rematch. This brings out Cesaro to say that Owens and Zayn cost him the Intercontinental Title last night. Shane makes a #1 contenders match right now.

## Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Miz and Maryse are on commentary. Cesaro immediately starts with the uppercuts across the ring, followed by another big one on the floor. Back in and Cesaro gets two off the high cross body but Owens goes after the

shoulder to take over. The superkick and backsplash get two and it's time to work on the arm a bit more. A quick strike exchange drops Cesaro but he crotches Owens on top.

Kevin cuts him off again with a Stunner over the top rope, followed by a frog splash off the apron as we take a break. Back with Owens hitting the Cannonball but running into the springboard uppercut. They head outside with Owens grabbing the title but Miz takes it away. That earns Miz an uppercut and it's time for the champ to run in for the DQ at 11:30.

**Rating:** C. The match was fun while it lasted but at the same time there's only so much you can do when you pretty much have a big clock counting down until Miz runs in for the DQ. That kind of stuff gets old quick, especially when this had the potential to be a really fun match between two power guys.

Post match Cesaro gets double teamed until Sami Zayn runs in for the save before holding up the title. This sets up the four way, even though there's no logical reason for Sami to still be involved after losing last night. If they had gone with the logical move of Sami winning last night, you can still bring in Owens because of the required rematch. That's too simple for WWE though so we get more illogical storytelling.

Dean Ambrose is in the back with Stephanie, who volunteers to be the guest on the Ambrose Asylum.

R-Truth and Tyler Breeze are in the back talking about selfie sticks (Truth's has leaves) when Goldust comes in. Goldust insults Breeze a bit and a challenge is issued. Truth doesn't like Goldust insulting his friend so Fandango comes in to be Goldust's partner.

Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows say AJ was close to winning last night which makes AJ want it even more. They imply they'll help in the rematch but Roman Reigns comes in to say he respects AJ but not the other two. The Usos come in and a challenge is made for a six man.

### Goldust vs. Tyler Breeze

Fandango and R-Truth are here as the seconds. Truth gives Breeze a

headband to start but Goldust knocks it off. Goldust: "WHY DIDN'T YOU EVER GIVE ME ONE OF THESE???" Truth doesn't notice as he's playing with the stick, which distracts Goldust enough for Tyler to get in a few shots. They start dancing at each other, allowing Breeze to grab a rollup for the pin at 1:49.

Here's New Day to talk about their upcoming title defense against the Vaudevillains, who were awarded the match last night after Enzo's injury. We see a clip of the injury, which seems to be just a concussion. If this wasn't such a serious moment, Woods would be showing us all the nasty things Beyonce sent to him on Twitter last night....but unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen though was Enzo being released from the hospital after all the other tests were negative.

This brings out the Vaudevillains with Aiden singing about how they're going to win the titles. Apparently Enzo was the realest guy in the emergency room....and here are the Dudley Boyz to interfere. They say they didn't see the Vaudevillains win anything last night after the match was ended fast. A fight is about to break out when Big Cass interrupts. He's tired of hearing about the Vaudevillains taking out his family and the brawl is quickly on.

#### Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains vs. New Day/Colin Cassady

Joined in progress with Woods working over Gotch and bringing in Kofi for a kick to the chest. Big E. comes in for the splash before it's time for the Unicorn Stampede. Kofi gets in a running dropkick in the corner but Bubba kicks Woods in the face to take over. English comes in for a superkick as the heels start taking turns on Woods. A dropkick finally gets Xavier out of trouble, only to have D-Von drop an elbow on his back to stop the tag. The middle rope elbow misses though and there's the hot tag off to Kofi. Everything breaks down and Kofi gets sent out to the floor in a heap as we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Gotch holding him in place for a D-Von elbow drop. Kofi finally dropkicks the Vaudevillains down and it's off to Cass to clean house. English is sent flying off a fall away slam, followed by a big boot the face. Everything breaks down again with Bubba

suplexing Cass, only to have Kofi springboard in to break up 3D. Cass' East River Crossing puts D-Von away at 14:32.

**Rating:** B. These guys were actually rolling out there with eight people in a match that made sense. New Day continues to be awesome and should be in for a good match against the Vaudevillains, though I can't imagine they'll actually drop the titles. Enzo coming back will get an eruption and the injury makes them feel like even more of an underdog team, which fits in with them so perfectly.

We look back at the main event which set up Styles' rematch at Extreme Rules.

Now we look at the Montreal Screwjob finish to the Women's Title match. You all know the Montreal Screwjob. I mean, WWE certainly thinks you do because they're certainly not going to explain it because they know that every fan, including those under the age of 18, have gone back and looked at every bit of the company's history ever. We do however get a clip of Charles Robinson as Little Naitch from back in the day to actually explain the screwjob.

#### Emma vs. Becky Lynch

Apparently they've been arguing on Twitter lately. Becky quickly knocks her to the floor and does her head shaking dance, only to get pulled off the middle rope to change control. A butterfly suplex gets two on Becky and we hit a half nelson of all things. Emma sends her hard into the corner for the Emma Sandwich and a near fall. Becky gets all fired up and forearms her in the corner, followed by an exploder suplex for two. A quick poke to the eye slows Becky down though and a Michinoku Driver puts Becky away at 5:45.

**Rating:** C+. Would it be the worst idea in the world to let some of these other Four Horsewomen win something now and then? I mean, I know we have to wait on Sasha because of...uh, reasons, but do they also have to have Becky losing most of the time? At least it was someone like Emma getting the win and not one of the lower level women but we need to have Becky get a win here or there. Sasha actually wrestling would be nice too.

Greetings From Puerto Rico.

Here's Dean Ambrose for the Asylum with Stephanie as his guest. Stephanie talks about how happy she is so Dean shows us a shot from Wrestlemania where Reigns speared her. That was the result of Stephanie being overzealous and she does her corporate speech about how awesome WWE is because of loyalty.

Dean goes on a long rant about loyalty and asks how many sacrifices Stephanie has made. I mean, yeah she's made a ton but Shane has made all of the same sacrifices over the years. That must make Stephanie mad because now she and Shane are exactly the same. Stephanie isn't happy with this so she cancels the Asylum and brings out Jericho for the Highlight Reel once again. Dean gets in a brawl with him of course but walks into a Codebreaker. Jericho breaks Mitch over Dean's head in the ultimate act of evil.

### Battle Royal

Apollo Crews, Darren Young, Alberto Del Rio, Damien Sandow, Stardust, Titus O'Neil, Zack Ryder, Sheamus, Curtis Axel, Rusev, Dolph Ziggler, Sin Cara, Baron Corbin, Viktor, Bo Dallas,

For the #1 contendership to the US Title and I think I have everyone involved. Kalisto is on commentary and it's Viktor quickly being eliminated. Sandow is sent out a few seconds later and Crews gets rid of Stardust. Darren gets eliminated and Sheamus Brogue Kicks Crews out for a bit of a surprise.

Someone puts Sheamus out off camera but he slides back in with no issue. Ziggler superkicks Corbin over the top for an elimination but Corbin pulls him outside under the ropes and beats the tar out of him. For a nice change of pace, Corbin is smart enough to throw the half dead Ziggler back in so Rusev can get the official elimination as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus eliminating Titus (great use of his comeback) and Del Rio hitting his double stomp on Axel for a quick elimination. Cara tosses Dallas and we're down to Cara, Rusev, Del Rio, Sheamus and Ryder. A

spinning cross body puts Rusev down and a springboard moonsault does the same to Sheamus and Del Rio.

There's an Irish Curse to Ryder but not enough for an elimination. Cara makes the eternally stupid mistake of going to the top, allowing Del Rio to shove him out and get us down to four. We've got the former League of Nations and Ryder, meaning Sheamus thinks they should join forces again. Ryder gets stomped down but hangs onto the top rope, leaving the League to fight each other.

Del Rio gets in a Backstabber on Rusev but walks into a Rough Ryder. Rusev spinwheel kicks Ryder down though and all four are still in it. The jumping superkick and a regular superkick are enough to get rid of Sheamus, followed by another superkick to send Del Rio to the floor. Ryder puts Alberto out and we're down to Ryder vs. Rusev, sending the fans into a short lived frenzy. Rusev charges into some knees in the corner and a missile dropkick puts Rusev down. The Broski Boot actually connects but Rusev no sells it and throws Ryder out for the win at 13:38.

**Rating:** C. This was actually awesome stuff (for a battle royal) with some great drama near the end, even though I'm sick of seeing the League of Nations guys in these spots. Putting the title back on Rusev would make sense as it was his best time ever in the company, but it really does feel like we're taking a big step back in time if he wins the belt again.

Here are Charlotte and Ric Flair to address the end of last night's title match. Charlotte really doesn't see the controversy in the decision so here's Charles Robinson to explain his actions. Charles says Natalya was screaming to stop it last night and that counts as a submission. Robinson gets a bit confused about whether his admiration for Ric had anything to do with his decision so here's a CHEATER chant for him.

That's enough from Charles so here's Natalya to say this is all about Ric. Well of course it is. I mean, he's RIC FLAIR. Whether he wants to admit it or not, Bret is the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. Charlotte goes after Natalya but gets sent to the floor, leaving Ric to take off his gear. Natalya slaps him in the face and puts on a Sharpshooter before Charlotte gets her dad out of

there. The Flairs leave so Natalay grabs Ric's Hall of Fame ring and Rolex.

After the announcers shill for WWE, Stephanie makes Charlotte vs. Natalya in a submissions match at Extreme Rules. As a bonus, Ric is banned from ringside. Stephanie's request for a WOO is denied.

#### AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows vs. Usos/Roman Reigns

AJ and Reigns get things going with Styles grabbing a headscissors but easily being thrown off. Some kicks to the leg have Reigns in trouble so it's off to Gallows for a battle of uppercuts. Jey comes in for his running forearm in the corner, only to dive into a big boot for two. It's time for the big standoff on the floor after Jey is thrown over the top and we take a break.

Back with Anderson hammering away on Jey before it's off to AJ. The beatdown is on and Styles doesn't seem to like the idea of his buddies breaking up a tag. The distraction lets Jey get in a superkick to set up the tag off to Reigns. House is quickly cleaned with Roman beating everyone away until Anderson kicks him in the face for two.

AJ gets a blind tag but eats a tilt-a-whirl slam for his efforts. There's a Superman punch to Gallows but Jimmy comes in off another blind tag with a high cross body for two on AJ. The Boot of Doom into the flapjack sends Reigns into the barricade, leaving AJ to hit the Phenomenal Forearm to the pin on Jimmy at 11:30.

**Rating:** B-. Another good match here as they let things break down a bit before the ending. I like the idea of the Usos being the lower level guys who can't keep up with Anderson and Gallows while Reigns is enough to take out any of them but not enough to take out everyone at once. It's a simple story and the feud is working well but I can't imagine it ending with anything other than Reigns standing tall again.

Post match Anderson and Gallows give AJ a chair before holding Reigns. AJ can't do it so the beatdown is on again. The Usos come in and get the chair to knock AJ down (it wasn't clear if they saw him throw it away). AJ gets back up and hits them with the chair, earning himself a Superman

punch. Reigns isn't done yet though and loads up the announcers' table for a powerbomb to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The wrestling was good tonight but it really feels like we're just heading to Payback II with more McMahons walking us through things. That's the difference between Shane and Stephanie: Shane seems like he's telling us what's going to happen and Stephanie has to explain every single thing to you because you're not that bright. The show was still entertaining and Extreme Rules is going to be fun but they really need to get to the point with the McMahon stuff, which means we're likely waiting at least another three months on any major developments.

### Results

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Miz interfered

Tyler Breeze b. Goldust – Rollup

New Day/Colin Cassady b. Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains – East River Crossing to D-Von

Emma b. Becky Lynch – Michinoku Driver

Rusev won a battle royal last eliminating Zack Ryder

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows b. Usos/Roman Reigns – Phenomenal Forearm to Jimmy

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# Payback 2016: The Booking Anchor

## Payback 2016

Date: May 1, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're off to the first pay per view after Wrestlemania and things are kind of on a roll around here. The main event is Roman Reigns defending the WWE World Title against AJ Styles with the question of whether or not Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows will be interfering on AJ's behalf. Other than that we find out who will be in control of Monday Night Raw going forward between the Authority and Shane McMahon. Let's get to it.

### Pre-Show: Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This was bumped from the main card earlier today. Corbin tosses him around to start and gets two off a hard right hand. Ziggler's comeback is easily cut off with a modified hot shot as Corbin keeps casually walking around. A heavy clothesline sets up the chinlock to keep Corbin on Ziggler's neck.

Ziggler gets out and grabs a sleeper for a bit, followed by a Fameasser for two. They head outside with Ziggler loading up a dive but getting kicked out of the air. Corbin loads up a powerbomb but it's the old Big Show Alley Oop to send Ziggler face first into the post for a good looking crash. For some reason Baron takes way too much time getting back in, allowing Ziggler to roll Corbin up for the pin at 7:43.

**Rating:** C-. The match was a nicely done big man beatdown for the most part and then they do THAT ending? I don't know how to make this any clearer to WWE but Dolph Ziggler isn't going anywhere and it's long past due to stop giving him wins like this. Corbin could be something on the

main roster but now he's losing his first major match less than a month after debuting. I'm sure it's a surprise though and that's what WWE must be going for, along with annoying the NXT fans who think they understand wrestling.

#### Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Ryback

Kalisto is defending after Ryback beat him in a non-title match a few weeks back on Smackdown. The crowd is really not pleased to see Ryback here and bust out the tried and true GOLDBERG chants. Ryback blasts him with a right hand to start (that sounds so familiar) but Kalisto gets in a monkey flip to send Ryback outside.

A suicide dive sets up a springboard corkscrew plancha with Ryback barely getting underneath him in time to keep Kalisto from bouncing off the apron. Back in and a tornado DDT is countered into a suplex for two as we take a break. We come back to see Ryback sending him shoulder first into the post, only to grab a spinning DDT to put both guys down.

They head to the apron with Kalisto hitting a nice enziguri and another DDT to send Ryback onto the apron (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!"). Ryback comes up holding his shoulder but Kalisto goes with a spinning kick to the face and the hurricanrana driver for two. The Salida Del Sol is countered into a Shell Shock attempt but Kalisto flips out of that as well, only to eat a spinebuster for two. Ryback goes up for some reason but gets kicked in the head again to slow him down. Kalisto goes up as well and is promptly gorilla pressed face first onto the mat. The top rope splash misses though and the Salida Del Sol retains the title at 9:28.

**Rating:** B. That was an AWESOME match with both guys working very hard throughout. Now the problem here is WHAT WERE THEY THINKING??? Kalisto is another name on a long list of lame duck champions who never get to do anything with the title because they either never defend the thing or lose their non-title matches. At the same time, Ryback continues to flounder in his latest heel run because WWE keeps cutting his legs off in matches like this. Still though, awesome match and one of the best pre-show matches they've ever done.

The opening video is Bray Wyatt talking about how payback is the first

thing we think of every day and how much it consumes all of us. This must have been made weeks ago.

Here's the New Day to open things up. They'll be down at ringside watching and sipping on some lemonade like Becky with the good hair. Woods offers his services to help Beyonce get back at Jay-Z for cheating on her and Big E. hits the catchphrases.

Now we get a normal opening video with the standard highlight packages on the big stuff.

#### Tag Team Tournament Finals: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains

The winners get a title shot at some point in the future. Enzo: "If my aunt had hair on her back, she'd be my uncle." The Vaudevillains need to get in their DeLorean and go back to the future and Cass thinks they're posing like Hey Arnold. Cass: "You never should have gotten off the stoop!" After saying they never should have left their stoop (another Hey Arnold reference), Cass calls the SAWFT to get us going.

Enzo and Gotch start things off with Simon working on the arm before it's off to the partners. The tag to Cass is treated as a big deal but everything breaks down with Cass throwing Enzo at both guys. Enzo gets sent hard out to the floor with his head hitting the bottom rope in an ugly crash. He isn't moving and a stretcher is brought out as the match is called off at about four minutes. I won't be rating this due to the time and the injury but it was fine while it lasted.

The announcers talk for a good while with the camera only showing Enzo for a few moments at a time.

Long video on Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens, the same one that aired on Raw and Smackdown.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

They slug it out immediately and Kevin is sent outside for a big flip dive. JBL starts talking about a tiger attacking Roy of Siegfried and Roy, including ripping off Chris Rock's line of "that tiger went tiger." Back in and Owens gets in a hard shot before dropping Sami face first

onto the apron. Zayn is sent hard into the steps as Cole tells us that Enzo is talking and moving his extremities. That's such a relief.

Back in and Owens poses a lot while asking why Sami isn't getting payback yet. A chinlock slows things down and it's Sami slugging away with forearms. The hard clothesline puts Kevin down but Sami can't follow up. Referee: "YOU GUYS GOOD?" Owens: "Shut up!" Sami hammers away in the corner before a Michinoku Driver (called the Blue Thunder Bomb by Cole) gets two.

The real Blue Thunder Bomb gets two more and Owens' brainbuster onto the knee gets the same. Kevin drops a frog splash and a couple of Cannonballs (JBL: "He may roll a perfect game!") but the Pop Up powerbomb is countered with a dropkick. The half and half suplex sends Kevin flying but he pops up and clotheslines Sami inside out. Another powerbomb is countered into a rollup as you can feel the chemistry here. These two just know each other so well and there's nothing that can replace that.

Sami's tornado DDT is countered into a backbreaker and Kevin's face turns evil. A third powerbomb, this time onto the apron, is countered again with a backdrop to send Kevin spine first onto the apron and then the floor. The diving tornado DDT plants Kevin again but Kevin superkicks his head off and finally gets the powerbomb for the pin at 14:28.

**Rating:** A-. I was really feeling this one as both guys beat the tar out of each other for a long time and told an awesome story of knowing each other so well. I would have had Sami go over here but you really can't go wrong with either guy winning. Both of them will be fine and Sami is the one who can lose most of his matches and be fine at the end.

Post match Kevin beats him up some more and demands that Byron bring him a mic. Kevin: "Ask me about beating Sami Zayn right now!" Byron, who is taller than Owens, asks if the rivalry is over. Owens: "THAT'S NOT WHAT I TOLD YOU TO SAY!" Kevin says he finally proved that he's the better man between the two of them and now he can refocus on getting back his Intercontinental Title. Byron asks if Kevin thinks Miz will retain the title, which Kevin takes as an invitation to do commentary on the next match.

## Intercontinental Title: Cesaro vs. The Miz

Miz is defending and there isn't much of a story here other than Cesaro wants the title. Miz goes for the shoulder to start but Cesaro shoves him away and shakes a finger at him. The delayed vertical suplex gets two (Owens: "He can keep him up for awhile but he can't keep him down for three.") followed by a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for the same.

Miz gets in a shot on the arm and cranks away on the shoulder as Owens is asked who he would rather face for the title. Owens: "I would rather face you but that's not going to happen." Back up and Miz poses a bit before hitting the sleeper. Cesaro gets caught in a bodyscissors but casually picks Miz up and throws him off for the break.

We hit the uppercuts with Owens saying he never wants to take another one of those. Cole: "Well if Cesaro wins you'll have to..." Owens: "COLE STOP TELLING ME WHAT I'LL HAVE TO DO!" A running dropkick gets two on Miz as Owens calls Miz Mike by mistake. Byron interprets this as Owens cheering for his friend. Owens: "Byron go call your mom or something because no one else wants to listen to you."

The spinning uppercut sets up Swiss Death for a very close two but Cesaro goes shoulder first into the post. Miz gets the Finale for two but here's Sami Zayn to go after Owens and fight him into the crowd. Cesaro swings Miz for a long time and puts on a Crossface but Owens and Zayn get on the apron to distract the referee as Miz taps. The distraction lets Miz roll Cesaro up for the pin at 10:26.

**Rating:** C+. DANG IT WWE STOP DOING STUPID THINGS! This should have been the biggest layup on the card but instead they'll keep the title on Miz because we haven't waited long enough to give Cesaro a major win. This is up there with the League of Nations beating New Day at Wrestlemania on the scale of stupid booking decisions. I'm a big Miz fan but they should have changed the title here and moved on to Owens vs. Cesaro vs. Zayn. On a more positive note, this was some of the funniest commentary I've ever heard as Owens is one of the best jerk heels in years.

Owens and Zayn keep fighting and Sami takes another Pop Up Powerbomb. Maryse has to save Miz from a powerbomb of his own.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho which started when Ambrose took over the Highlight Reel and turned it into the Ambrose Asylum. Jericho doesn't like the idea of someone upstaging him and the match was set up as a result.

### Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

Jericho bails to the floor to start so Dean chases him back inside and hits an early cross body. Chris crawls over to the referee for protection before dropping Dean ribs first across the top rope. We hit the chinlock on Dean for a bit but Jericho's bulldog is countered with a shove into the corner. Byron talks about both guys' documented careers, prompting JBL to say that it's documented because he and Cole have talked about him. Your lesson for this match: JBL needs to let Kevin Owens do the heel commentary.

Dean gets two off a bulldog of his own but the top rope elbow is countered into the Walls. A rope is eventually grabbed and Jericho is sent to the floor for the suicide dive. They head to the announcers' table with Jericho trying the Walls but settling for a catapult over the barricade for a big crash. As expected, Dean dives back in at nine before escaping the Codebreaker.

The rebound lariat puts both guys down for a breather. Now the top rope elbow gets two but Jericho grabs the Walls again, only to have Dean make the ropes again. The enziguri and butterfly backbreaker get two each for Chris but Dean gets the knees up to block the Lionsault. An awkward sequence (with Jericho laying on Dean's knees) sets up Dirty Deeds for the pin on Chris at 18:18.

**Rating:** C. It really is amazing how much damage that loss to Lesnar did to Ambrose as I just do not care about him anymore. This match went on for a LONG time and didn't go anywhere other than two people doing moves (and missing a lot of them) for the better part of twenty minutes. Dean winning is the right call, even if it makes Jericho going over AJ last month all the more confusing.

Jericho throws a fit post match.

Sasha Banks is talking to Shane McMahon.

### Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Natalya

Charlotte is defending and has Ric Flair in her corner while Natalya has her uncle Bret Hart in hers. Charlotte W00s at her to start but Natalya grabs the Sharpshooter. That's flipped away so Natalya nips up to scare the champ a bit. Another takedown sets up a leg lock for a bit before Charlotte bails to the floor. A chase results in Natalya getting kicked on the way back in but the fans would rather have Sasha.

They trade some chops until Natalya sends her flying with a release German suplex. Charlotte starts in on the leg ("Hey Bret, you want to learn something?") but takes too much time bragging and gets caught in an armbar. Natalya shoves her off the top for a big crash, allowing Flair to tell some fans to keep their mouths shut. Charlotte loads up a powerbomb onto the apron but Natalya counters into something resembling a hurricanrana on the floor.

Back in and a boot to the face stops Natalya's discus lariat, only to have a slap (yes a slap) break up the Figure Eight. A quick Natural Selection gets two for the champ, followed by that great looking moonsault for the same. The Figure Four is put on but quickly reversed so Charlotte puts on Natalya....AND IT'S FREAKING MONTREAL with Charles Robinson (a noted Flair megafan) ringing the bell without Natalya tapping to retain the title at 13:04.

**Rating:** C+. MONTREAL. It's been nearly twenty years and they're STILL doing that thing again? Would it freaking kill them to just put Sasha in the title hunt instead of giving us Natalya vs. Charlotte IV or whatever it's going to be at Extreme Rules? Bret did absolutely nothing here and the whole thing feels like a huge waste of time and effort.

Bret and Natalya put on matching Sharpshooters post match. I'm so glad Natalya got over that loss in all of 14 seconds.

Here's Vince for his decision on the control of Raw but the fans cut him off with a CM PUNK chant. Vince talks about how amazing Raw is but gets cut off again, prompting him to ask how long it can go. Vince: "COME ON!

YOU'VE GOT MORE THAN THAT!" He talks about all the different eras Raw has gone through and thinks it's time for a new visionary. Vince brings out Stephanie to even more booing.

The fans are pleased with the idea of Reigns spearing Stephanie at Wrestlemania but she doesn't want their support or sympathy. Stephanie brags about her success, including the debut of the Shield and the Divas Revolution. Their biggest success was the launch of the WWE Network which went from an idea to 1.8 million subscribers. That brings her to Shane, whose only qualification to run Raw is being a man. After the better part of five minutes, Stephanie brings up Shane blackmailing Vince to get back into the company after leaving for seven years. Cue Shane to break up the BORING chants.

Shane shows a bunch of media clips about how he's made wrestling cool again. That brings him back to the WWE Network comment, which was Vince's idea. Of those 1.8 million subscribers, we've got about 18,000 of them in the house tonight. Oddly enough, a lot of those people came on board around Wrestlemania XXXII, which was probably due to one match in particular. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Stephanie: "Thank you, yes I do!"

Shane brings up the departure in 2007 and says it was due to his voice being ignored. In the void he left, the Authority took over and promptly ran the company into the ground. Shane came back to save the company's future for all of the future McMahon generations. The fans are entirely behind Shane of course but Vince says Shane shouldn't be here after the loss to Undertaker.

Then Shane came out the night after Wrestlemania and was handed Raw because he would fall on his face. However, Vince didn't think Shane failed that badly but he doesn't listen to these people. Vince wants to see them slit each others' throats and disembowel each other....so they'll both be running the show together. Shane and Stephanie shake hands before leaving.

Pre-show recap.

We recap the World Title match. Reigns won the title at Wrestlemania and AJ became #1 contender the next night at Raw. The twist has been the



debut of Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows, AJ's former partners in the Bullet Club in New Japan, who attacked Reigns multiple times. AJ has denied being behind it but Reigns doesn't buy it.

Enzo has been diagnosed with a concussion but all other tests have come back negative.

### WWE World Title: AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. AJ cranks on a headlock to start but is easily shoved away. Styles starts kicking at the legs but it's still a standoff in the early going. They do a quick chase around ringside and AJ gets in a few kicks to briefly take over. A hard clothesline turns AJ inside out and a big old sitout powerbomb gets two. The Superman punch is countered with a quick enziguri (cool visual there) and AJ's strike rush sets up the low forearm for two on the champ.

AJ elbows out of a Samoan drop and gets the Calf Crusher, sending Roman crawling to the ropes. Reigns bails to the floor and eats a GREAT looking Phenomenal Forearm to send both guys through the table in a big crash. AJ tries to throw Reigns back in but it's a countout win for Styles...until Shane comes out to make this match no countouts. Ignore the fact that he runs RAW and not pay per views of course.

They get back in with AJ not being able to hit anything off the top. Another strike rush sets up a 450 but Reigns gets the knees up for two. AJ is up first but dives into a right hand below the belt for a DQ. As you might expect, here's Stephanie to say not so fast because we're restarting it with no disqualifications. Oh yeah it's going to be all about the McMahons.

Reigns takes him outside and sends AJ into the steps before kicking him over the barricade and into the crowd. Thankfully Reigns doesn't follow him to avoid being murdered. AJ kicks him again and they head back inside, only to have another Phenomenal Forearm countered with a Superman punch. Again, that looked GREAT. A second Superman punch drops AJ but here are Gallows and Anderson to go after Roman.

The champ is beaten down and another Phenomenal Forearm gets two with

Reigns putting his foot on the ropes. Cue the Usos to go after Anderson and Gallows but Reigns shoves AJ onto all four of them to break up the fight. Now Reigns does his own big dive to take out the pile so AJ throws him inside for a springboard 450 (Not a shooting star Cole. Come on now that's not even close.) and another near fall. Another Forearm misses and the spear puts AJ down at 24:58.

**Rating:** A. Oh yeah this was awesome with Reigns being the perfect foil for someone like AJ and his high flying offense. It's clear that we're getting a big gimmick rematch in three weeks at Extreme Rules but at least the first match was excellent stuff. Shane and Stephanie interfering was really annoying but that's exactly what you have to expect going forward because they're like interesting or something. Great match here though and better than I was expecting.

Reigns poses until we cut to the back where Shane and Stephanie make AJ vs. Reigns II in an Extreme Rules match for the title. Shane supports Stephanie's decision to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Well that was....something indeed. There was a lot of good action but the booking decisions (Miz and Montreal) really brought things down. AJ vs. Reigns and Owens vs. Zayn were both excellent but my goodness the McMahon drama feels like something that is going to go on for the better part of ever. I had a good enough time watching it though and the wrestling in the two big matches really brought things up. Find a way to fix the booking (read as STOP DOING STUPID THINGS) and this show goes through the roof.

### Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains went to a no contest when Amore was injured

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

Miz b. Cesaro – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. Chris Jericho – Dirty Deeds

Charlotte b. Natalya – Sharpshooter

Roman Reigns b. AJ Styles – Spear

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## Enzo Amore Injured At Payback (Updated)

He was being sent outside and went neck first into the middle rope, causing his head to slam into the mat/apron. The match was almost immediately stopped and Enzo was taken out on a stretcher. This clearly wasn't storyline and looked very bad. The camera wasn't on him so no word on if his limbs were working or not.

Update: Cole says Enzo is talking and moving his extremities. That's such a huge relief.

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# Payback 2016 Preview

For once I'm actually looking forward to a regular pay per view as Payback has had an awesome set of buildup over the last few weeks. Things really have been picking up in recent weeks and while the ratings haven't been great, it's been an awesome series of wrestling matches and storytelling. Let's get to it.

We'll start with a title match as Kalisto defends the US Title against Ryback on the pre-show for the second straight pay per view. I have no idea why anyone would think Kalisto keeps the title here as his title reign has died worse and worse every single week. Ryback actually needs something to do these days and it would be nice to see him get another title run. I was digging his Intercontinental Title reign last year before it was handed over to Kevin Owens so the US Title would be just fine.

In another title match we have Charlotte defending the Women's Title against Natalya in a match that is really more about Ric Flair being opposed by Natalya's uncle Bret Hart. I get the idea of the match but I'm still not a fan of the match being more about the older guys. I'm sure the wrestling will be very good and of a high quality but I'm expecting Flair to help cheat again because that's how this story is going to roll.

Of course right now we're waiting on Sasha to get her big shot so this is more an exercise in waiting than anything else. On top of that, it would have been better if we hadn't just seen this at Roadblock but you can't expect WWE to come up with another idea that fast. I mean, it's not like they have a full division of possible challengers here or anything like that.

We'll keep up the title match theme here with what should be the biggest layup of the entire show: Cesaro taking the Intercontinental Title from the Miz. If Miz has proven one thing over the years, it's that he can take loss after loss before coming back to win the Intercontinental Title for a nothing reign with the title being dropped off to an upcoming star.

In this case, that would be Cesaro. There's no reason to suggest that

Cesaro doesn't get the title here as he's rocketed up the card and finally has the kind of character that can go somewhere. The only thing missing now is an actual accomplishment and the Intercontinental would certainly fit the description.

Speaking of results that should be obvious, Baron Corbin should be going over Dolph Ziggler. Much like Miz, Ziggler is a made man who can lose every single big match he has and not lose a drop of popularity so putting Corbin over is exactly the right move. Corbin is someone who could get some traction on the main roster and a win over Ziggler would be a good second start to his WWE career.

In the last of the lower card matches, we've got Enzo Amore vs. the Vaudevillains in the tag team tournament final for the right to face New Day for the titles later on. While this should be a layup on paper, I'm not so sure on who wins here. On one hand you could give the Vaudevillains the title shot to put New Day over a fresh team while they wait to have the Bullet Club get the belts in the summer.

On the other hand you could go with Enzo and Cass....but do you give them the titles this fast? You really don't want to risk Enzo and Cass losing what they have to the better act in New Day but you also don't want the new guys losing to a team that just isn't as good as they are in Gotch and English. We'll go with Enzo and Cass but I really wouldn't be surprised to be wrong here.

Now we'll get to some of the more interesting stuff and we'll start with Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho. After the win at Wrestlemania, it would seem that Jericho is getting ready for one last main event run, perhaps with one more World Title shot. If that's the case, a win over Ambrose would certainly do him a lot of favors. At the same time, Dean REALLY needs a big win after his near squash loss to Brock at Wrestlemania. Either way I can't imagine this is the last match we're going to see between the two and I think Dean goes over early on, but the idea of a draw is up there as well.

This brings us to probably the second biggest match on the card as Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens actually get to face each other on the WWE roster

for the first time ever (likely of many times in the future). For me, this one is an absolute layup: Sami should win and he should win going away. Owens is a bigger deal at this point and Sami needs a big main roster rub. I'm sure Owens will wind up winning the feud because Zayn doesn't win long term feuds (as he shouldn't) but he wins the first match to get things going hot. Owens will be fine long term and doesn't need the win as much here so we'll go with Sami starting fast.

That leaves us with the biggest match on the card and I'm not sure where to start here. Roman Reigns is defending the WWE World Title against AJ Styles but there's also the shadows of Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson who may or may not be in league with Styles. In this case, I don't think we're going to have the big Bullet Club moment yet but there's almost no way AJ loses. Instead, what I think is Reigns gets Anderson and Gallows on his side as the Roman Empire with AJ bringing in Finn Balor and then someone else for a big feud down the line.

WWE has done an excellent job setting up this match with AJ going over big name after big name and Reigns just kind of being there. It's a good way to have AJ look awesome while also giving Reigns a big win in his first title defense. The match should be a lot of fun as Reigns is great once the bell rings (assuming the match isn't 27 minutes long of course) and AJ is AJ. I'm really looking forward to this one and there are a lot of possibilities of what might happen at the end.

Payback looks like one heck of a show and it's going to be in front of a white hot Chicago crowd, which could be a big hit or a miss depending on how things go. This is a show that looks like it has a great batch of matches with almost nothing looking weak on the entire card. It should be a lot of fun, which is so strange to say outside of Wrestlemania season.

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