

Smackdown – September 6, 2016: This One Is A Little Different

Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

I'm not sure how but we're already at the go home show for Backlash. At this point there are five announced matches (assuming you count a tournament final as an announced match) which means we're going to get a lot more stuff announced tonight or Sunday's matches are going to be very long. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring with the Smackdown Women's Title.

Sunday's Six Pack Challenge will be an elimination match (there's how they fill in some time) but before we get there, we'll be having a six women tag match. First though, we're going to have a forum with all six getting some time to talk. We'll start with Becky Lynch but before she can say anything, Daniel has to plug Total Bellas.

The fans clearly aren't interested so Bryan lets Becky talk about being the #1 female Smackdown draft pick. Her journey has brought her here but Natalya cuts her off. Natalya says the Draft was the worst night of her career because Smackdown was supposed to be her kingdom but now she has to put up with Becky and the unnatural hair.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words

or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

Dean Ambrose pours most of a bottle of sugar into his coffee.

The bosses are talking about the women's match when Miz comes in. He's not happy about having to defend the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler at Backlash and thinks it's because of what he said to Bryan a few weeks ago. Bryan says Miz can either fight Ziggler or just hand over the title right now. Miz walks away with the title intact. So much for Bryan and Miz not being on screen at the same time, which is a good thing.

The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title with Ziggler on commentary. What does it say that I knew this was going to be Crews because he's the designated midcard jobber? Crews runs him over to start and blocks a headlock with raw power. A shot to the face puts Miz on the floor and Crews moonsaults onto him as we go to a break.

Back with Miz choking in the corner as Ziggler keeps talking about how winning and losing doesn't matter as long as he tries his best. You know, two weeks after talking about how winning was all that mattered. No wait, it was winning the title and then defending it which mattered because that's the story they were going with this week. Miz's running corner clothesline has Crews in trouble but he sends Miz outside. That means it's time to get in Dolph's face and slap him in the jaw, only to have Miz shove Crews into him. A quick posting stuns Crews and the Skull Crushing Finale ends Apollo at 10:12.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose

every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

Post match Ziggler chases Miz off and has the title in front of him. Ziggler invites Miz in to get the belt but he sends Maryse in instead. See, that's the kind of thing that shows character rather than "well golly I didn't win the match that I said I absolutely had to win but I sure tried and that's what matters" before saying that he has to win the big one (because winning the Intercontinental Title, a title he's held four times already, now counts as the big one).

AJ Styles is livid about video of him getting crotched last week. He yells at the production assistant who provided the video and that's about it.

American Alpha video.

The Usos say they still run this tag team division. The division has been around for about three weeks and they've already had to affirm their dominance? That's not a good sign.

Bray Wyatt talks about men having to fight to survive. They had to learn to deal with predators, who only knew how to hunt and kill. The predator didn't know how to create and one day they became a play thing. History repeats itself and Orton is no longer the predator he once was. Bray is the evolution of man and at Backlash, predator becomes prey.

Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch/Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella, who didn't seem like she kicked out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Becky in trouble as Natalya sends her into the apron and grabs a chinlock. Bliss comes in and grabs a chinlock of her own before Natalya hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Becky finally dives over for the hot tag to Nikki and a Disaster kick gets two on Bliss. The TKO gets two on Carmella with Bliss making the save as everything breaks down. Bliss misses her moonsault knees to the ribs and Carmella's Code of Silence makes Nikki tap at 12:53.

Rating: D. This was bad and there's really no way around it. Between Naomi focusing on looking athletic without having the ability to pull it off, Carmella having all of one good looking move, Bliss not being able to take a move or hit one of her own and Nikki being in the match for two minutes because they're trying to keep her safe, there's only so much Natalya and Becky can do. This division just does not have the depth to work right now and it's showing more and more when there's so little to praise in a match with the whole division.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

We get a handshake to start but the Usos jump Alpha from behind in what feels like a heel turn. Not that it matters as Alpha comes right back and the Grand Amplitude ends Jimmy at 27 seconds.

Post match (with the replay clipping the thing) the Usos beat Alpha down by sending Jordan shoulder first into the post and superkicking Gable in the knee. Jey puts on a Tequila Sunrise and Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Gable's other leg for a good looking beatdown. The heel turn is a really good idea for the Usos as they've been the exact same team for years now. At least this gives them a little freshening up.

Orton tells a story about a dying man killing a rabbit but getting caught by a snake who wanted the rabbit for himself. The snake didn't attack until after the man had picked up the rabbit because he knew he could have them both. At Backlash, Bray won't know what hit him.

Here's Fandango to say that Tyler Breeze is out finding fabric for their upcoming fashion line. Instead he's found a woman to tango

with Fandango but she's a bit too wild for him and he throws her out. Fandango asks for anyone else so here's Kane to chokeslam him. Fans: "GO BIG RED!" (University of Nebraska football chant).

AJ breaks a guy's phone for not showing him enough respect.

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Hype Bros vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

The Slater Family is in the front row as Slater and Ryder start things off. Zack's middle rope dropkick gets an early two and it's off to Rawley to send Heath outside. Rawley runs Rhyno down and we take an early break. Back with Slater avoiding a splash in the corner but the fans want Rhyno. The hot tag brings in Ryder and Rhyno but Slater tags himself in and gets rolled up for two. Rhyno saves Heath from the Broski Boot and a Gore ends Ryder at 7:18.

Rating: D+. This was an interesting one as Rhyno was WAY over and the fans are already into Slater but Ryder and Rawley are popular enough that it's hard to have them be heels. Either way, Slater and Rhyno were the best possible option and could get the belts, especially given Gable's knee injury.

We look at the knee injury earlier.

Renee Young doesn't have much of an update on Gable's condition but the Usos come in to say they were letting out their bottled up aggression. They've been putting their bodies on the line for years and the fans turned on them but love American Alpha the second they saw them.

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy. Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena. On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't

give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

Overall Rating: C. This show was very different than usual and that's a good thing as they head into a rather weak pay per view. There are only five matches for the show and tonight focused on the matches to crown new champions. The wrestling really wasn't the focus here and it's a good idea to spend this show focusing on everything other than the main event, which has gotten a lot of time already. I really don't see a three hour pay per view based on this card but they've stretched stuff out in other ways before.

Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Naomi/Becky Lynch – Code of Silence to Bella

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Hype Bros – Gore to Ryder

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Monday Night Raw – September 5, 2016: A Labor Of Boredom

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the last five minutes of Raw and focuses on the big online reaction.

Earlier today Stephanie McMahon demanded a big celebration for Owens. Mick Foley came up and looked really upset. Last week, HHH made him look like a fool and Stephanie won't talk to him about it. Stephanie gets all serious when Foley accuses her of knowing what HHH was going to do. Stephanie: "Who do you think you're talking to?" Oh here we go.

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

Mick and Stephanie are in the ring and welcome Owens (in a SUIT) as the balloons fall and pyro goes off. Owens agrees that he does deserve this before ripping into the fans for making it all about

themselves with the YOU DESERVE IT chants. He's known that since the day he set foot in this ring and doesn't need the fans to tell him that all over again. Last week he beat three superstars to win this title and yeah he got a little nudge from HHH.

Owens had already done 98% of the work though so tonight it's officially the Kevin Owens Show. This brings out a ticked off Rollins to say this isn't about Owens. Instead he goes off on Stephanie for letting him down last week. Owens says this isn't about Seth but Rollins keeps going on his rampage and says everyone is in Stephanie's pocket. Kevin has been HHH's chosen one since the day he debuted in NXT but Seth is here to burn the whole thing to the ground.

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth punches him in the face. Stephanie suspends Seth indefinitely but Foley immediately overturns it, drawing him one of the loudest pops he's gotten in years. Instead of suspending him, Foley gives Seth (Foley to Seth: "I've never really liked you.") the title match at Clash of the Champions.

This was good stuff for the most part, assuming you can ignore HHH helping Rollins last week not being brought up. Rollins seemingly turning face (or at least starting it off) is a really good thing and WAY overdue but it certainly seems to be a slower burn than a full on version. Either way, Clash just got a lot better looking on paper.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Non-title and Charlotte has given Dana a clipboard to take notes. Bayley starts in on the arm and throws some Japanese armdrags, only to have Charlotte send her face first into the buckle. That just

fires Bayley up and she sends Charlotte into the buckles a few times instead. Charlotte heads outside and Bayley tries a dropkick under the ropes (think Sami's diving DDT) but leaves it way short, leaving her to just kick Charlotte in the chest instead. Bayley is favoring her knee as we go to a break.

Back with Charlotte holding the figure four neck lock and actually getting two off a rollup. Charlotte slams the bad leg into the corner and then wraps it around the leg. That sets up a half crab and DDT on the knee but Bayley grabs a rollup to break the momentum. Some limping ax handles to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Dana pulls Charlotte out of the way of an elbow. Somehow that's not a DQ so Bayley kicks Charlotte into Dana and hits the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 12:40.

Rating: C+. The important thing here is the time. This match worked because it had some time to set up the leg injury and the ending made sense (save for ANOTHER lack of a disqualification) due to the extra focus it received. You can't do anything important in a four minute match and it helped so much to actually let this thing go somewhere for a change. Good stuff and the PPV rematch is obvious. Connor's Cure video for children's cancer awareness month.

Charlotte yells at Dana, who promises to make up for it. That earns her one heck of a slap in the face.

Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast with a dropkick and sends Jericho outside for a suicide dive. Oh yeah he's wrestling like a face. Back in and Jericho slaps him a few times as the fans aren't sure who to cheer

for. Jericho sends him face first into the buckle and we take a break. Back with Rollins hammering away and getting two off the Sling Blade. A Blockbuster gets the same and Rollins might as well have a big sign saying YEP I'M A FACE NOW around his neck.

Rollins dropkicks him out of the air but gets caught in the Walls. That goes as far as you would expect and Rollins' low superkick gets two. Rollins gets caught on top but still shoves Jericho off, only to miss the frog splash. The Lionsault gets a close two as this is really picking up. The Codebreaker is broken up and a Pedigree puts Jericho away at 13:47.

Rating: B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #3 in the series with Cesaro down 2-0 and coming in with a bad shoulder/back. Cesaro grabs some rollups for early near falls but a backdrop has him in trouble. Sheamus sends the back into the apron and drives in some knees. The Cloverleaf is blocked but Sheamus grabs four straight Irish Curses for a near fall. With that not working, Sheamus lifts him up for the Celtic Cross but drops it down into a backbreaker. The Brogue Kick makes it 3-0 to Sheamus at 4:06.

Rating: C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Before the match, Enzo thinks he's in labor so Cass, who has watched a lot of ER, performs Lamaze with HOW YOU DOING replacing the "hoo hoo" part. Enzo and Cass take over to start and it's off to a quick

break. Back with Enzo in trouble but avoiding a Primo charge and making the hot tag off to Cass. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is broken up and Epico rolls Enzo up with a handful of trunks at 7:05. Too much was in the break to rate but I'd again like to point out that NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE SHINING STARS.

Sami Zayn says his career has been stuck in place since he beat Owens, who is now the Universal Champion. Owens comes in and laughs at the idea that Sami is chasing him now. The race will never be over and Sami says he'll win the title on his own, without HHH handing it to him on a silver platter.

Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

It's time for Anderson and Gallows to not be funny. Now they're retirement specialists who have already gotten rid of the Dudley Boyz, so now let's welcome the OLD DAY. Cue some New Day impersonators (one on a motorized scooter, one on a walker and one on a cane) to a slow motion version of their theme. The crowd is just silent for this as the Old Day says everything changed for them at Clash of Champions. We get every old person joke you can imagine, including Big E.'s hips going out as he does the swivel.

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

Titus O'Neil is on commentary for reasons of pure torture. Darren gets an early two off a swinging neckbreaker but has to fight out of a chinlock. Titus goes out to ringside as Darren hits the Gut Check for the pin at 2:15.

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

Alicia Fox checks on her injured friend when Nia Jax, who just happened to be there, shows up and laughs. Total Divas is mentioned and Fox yells a lot while throwing things. Nia just leaves as she goes nuts.

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week? Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

Here's Sasha Banks for an announcement. She talks about how every story has an ending before talking about the Divas Revolution. Back in July 2015, Stephanie McMahon (oh yeah) introduced the Divas Revolution and it was a new era without bra and panties matches (which there hadn't been in YEARS) and no more butterfly title (not for about nine months actually).

This revolution was about every little girl and every person who has been told they're not enough. She used to collect soda cans to try to save up enough money to come to a WWE event. Sasha starts crying as she talks about being injured at Summerslam and she has an update on her condition. Cue Dana Brooke to say she's going to use Sasha's broken body to finish what Charlotte started at Summerslam. Dana goes after Sasha but gets caught in a Bank Statement. The bad news was for Charlotte, who will be facing Sasha at Clash of Champions.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They start slugging it out at the bell and it's quickly outside with Sami going shoulder first into the barricade. Sami does his moonsault off the barricade (and kicks Owens square in the face) as we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock and sending Owens to the floor for back to back flip dives.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two but Owens rolls to the apron before the Helluva Kick. A Stunner over the ropes has Sami in trouble but the half and half suplex gets two on the champ. Sami climbs the ropes but lands on a bad ankle. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami grabs another half and half to drop Kevin on his head. Back in and the ankle gives out again, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin on Sami at 13:05.

Rating: B-. This was their usual good match but you knew Owens wasn't going to lose his first match as the champion. Sami will probably get his title match at some point in the future and that's going to be one heck of a rollercoaster when they finally get there. Good stuff here though but this show is way past saving.

Post match here's Roman Reigns to a LOUD chorus of booing. Chris Jericho comes out to have Owens' back but Foley prevents the violence. Next week it's Roman vs. Owens and if Reigns wins, it's a triple threat at Clash of the Champions. They had that same booking idea recently on Smackdown and it's still overdone here. Reigns spears Jericho to let off some steam and end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Shining Stars b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Monday Night Raw – February 26, 1996: There's Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 26, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Hopefully things pick up a bit this week as there's going to be a showdown between Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart with a little over a month to go before their WWF World Title match at Wrestlemania XII. Other than that we get another Larry Fling Live skit because we're just that lucky. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Diesel and Undertaker playing mind games with each other. That's an underrated feud and it's cool to see it again.

Opening sequence.

Isaac Yankem D.D.S. vs. Jake Roberts

This is actually Jake's in ring Raw debut. Jake shoves him around to start and it's so weird to see Kane just in pants and with that curly hair. Isaac gets in a clothesline and drives some fists to the face, only to get caught in the DDT for the quick pin.

Rating: D. That DDT was Jake's only major offense in the entire (short) match. This was around the time when Jake was just a disaster in the ring and it was getting harder and harder to watch him out there. Yankem was long past his expiration date and would return as Fake Diesel a few months after this character finally died.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back due to fan requests.

Bob Holly vs. Diesel

This is a match that Eric Bischoff actually talked about live on Nitro, spoiling it for the audience. You know, because this match needed to be spoiled. Bob's early offense lasts as long as you would expect it to but Diesel keeps looking around for Undertaker to pop up through the ring. Holly makes a comeback and we actually take a break, only to come back to see the Jackknife ending this.

Rating: D-. That's for the break because the post commercial stuff was all of ten seconds long. I can't stand it when they're clearly just stretching a match out for the sake of stretching it out and it happened way too often at this point. To be fair it happens today too and it's every bit as annoying.

Diesel goes to leave and the gong sounds. The lights go out and Undertaker is in the ring but he disappears when Diesel comes close.

Coward. They go out again and Undertaker is on the video screen, saying he can play mind games too.

Ahmed Johnson vs. Shinobi

Al Snow as a ninja. Ahmed throws him outside like the jobber with a stupid gimmick that he is and we get a phone call from Goldust, who has a poem for Roddy Piper. As we hear about Goldust wanting to play Piper's bag, Shinobi botches a springboard with Johnson just staring at him. The spinebuster and Pearl River Plunge wrap this up quick.

Mankind talks about playing the piano for his mommy and her friends.

Vince brings out Shawn and Bret for a big interview. Shawn says he has more respect for Bret than anyone in this building and Bret may be the best there was and ever will be, but right now there might be someone better. Bret knows that there's been a lot of time put into this title and he's shown how great he is. His job is to be champion but Shawn has one night to beat him.

They get into a debate about who is in the best condition so here's Roddy Piper with something to say. At Wrestlemania, Piper doesn't want to hear about any tights pulling or a DQ. Oh and he doesn't want to see Shawn's abs because they don't mean anything. Piper finally gets to the point and introduces the idea of the Iron Man match with the ONE HOUR time limit being the big sticking point.

British Bulldog/Owen Hart vs. Yokozuna

Vince actually says Yokozuna is facing his ex stablemates. Yokozuna elbows and slams Owen to start before doing the same to Bulldog. Double teaming works a bit better and we take a break because this show hasn't gone on long enough yet. Back with Owen missing an elbow drop but Vader comes out for the DQ.

Rating: D-. To be fair it had been a long time since we had a bad match. Yokozuna was just way beyond saving at this point and was little more than a freak show. Vader beating him up would have been fine at Wrestlemania but they were probably better off changing things up for the sake of the fans having to watch those two have a match on their own.

Ahmed Johnson and Jake Roberts come out for the save, albeit with Ahmed doing all the work and Jake walking in slow motion before bringing out the yellow snake. I've heard of worse Plan B's.

We wrap it up with Larry Fling Live with special guests Huckster and

Nacho Man. They immediately start with the jokes about Hogan being injured by Woman's shoe. Both of them seem to be involved with Liz and that doesn't go well. Oh and they're both too old to wrestle for the WWF, which is why Hogan would be champion in six years.

Billionaire Ted calls in and Hogan freaks out, hitting everyone with horrible chair shots (ala SuperBrawl VI) while Larry holds a woman's shoe. See, this was actually funny and making fun of WCW for doing stupid stuff, not for whatever Vince's latest issue was.

Overall Rating: F. Other than announcing Wrestlemania's main event gimmick, this was the most worthless show I can remember in a long time. There was nothing worth seeing throughout the show and the Hogan stuff at the end might have been the most entertaining part. On the other show, we had the Alliance to End Hulkamania. In other words, it was a horrible time to be a wrestling fan and it was only going to get worse.

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Monday Night Raw – February 19, 1996: On The Road Again

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 19, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're done with In Your House VI and the big story is that it's time for Wrestlemania. There's barely anything to talk about coming out of last night's show other than Bret is still champion, Diesel vs. Undertaker is pretty clear for Wrestlemania and it's a countdown until Shawn wins the title. Let's get to it.

Sunny, on the beach in a black swimsuit (my goodness) tells us that this show might not be appropriate for all fans.

We recap last night's main event with Undertaker pulling Diesel through the mat.

Intercontinental Title: Razor Ramon vs. Goldust

Goldust is defending and I had forgotten he was even champion at this point. Marlena tries to blow smoke in Razor's face to no effect (not clear how) and it's time to rip off Goldust's robe. A clothesline puts the champ on the floor for a breather as Lawler wonders if Goldust likes being manhandled. Goldust gets in a backdrop and we take a break. Back with Goldust grabbing a sleeper but getting crotched on top a few seconds later. Razor gives him a fall away slam over the top for a bad sounding crash. Jerry: "He probably broke his golden globes!" The belly to back superplex sends Goldust running up the aisle for the countout.

Rating: D. Nothing match here as it felt like they were out there for about two minutes worth of action. It's pretty clear that this is going to be setting up something in the future and probably would have had it not been for all of Razor's issues at the time. Bad match though and not a good way to start off a show.

Post match Razor grabs the mic and begs Roddy Piper to give him a fight with Goldust because he doesn't want his kids watching that stuff on TV.

Undertaker walks out of a casket.

Slam Jam recaps almost everything from last night and eats up a lot of time.

BodyDonnas vs. Aldo Montoya/Barry Horowitz

And never mind as Vader beats up the jobbers before the match starts.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back.

Sunny sings Happy Birthday to Mr. President. I smell a stupid

impression.

Bob Backlund campaigns in the crowd.

Ringmaster vs. Marty Jannetty

Vince during Ringmaster's entrance: "You talk about a stone cold man." Austin isn't interested in having any of this wrestling stuff and sends Marty outside earlier. The Stun Gun sends us to a break and we come back with Austin driving a knee into the ribs. We hit the STF and get some LOUD spot calling, which is the kind of thing Austin would complain about today. We hit a neck crank as the fans aren't that thrilled with Austin as a submission guy. Marty makes his really simple comeback but gets caught in the Million Dollar Dream for the fast submission.

Rating: D+. Marty is a good choice to do a job here as the fans like him and he's certainly going to put on a solid performance in defeat. Austin really needed a feud though as this character is hardly interesting and isn't going anywhere at the moment. To be fair though he had to start somewhere and this is better than a lot of the nonsense that some characters got.

Mankind is coming and might even bring his rat.

Tatanka vs. Undertaker

Undertaker chokes Tatanka into the corner like he's the Undertaker and he's facing Tatanka. A Samoan drop gives Tatanka a breather but here's Diesel with an ax to steal a cameraman as we go to a break. Back with Diesel hacking up Undertaker's casket and Undertaker fighting out of a chinlock. Old School looks to set up the Tombstone but Tatanka counters into a DDT. Diesel is STILL breaking up the casket as the Tombstone puts Tatanka away.

Rating: D-. I'm almost never a fan of a match happening as a backdrop for the angle or whatever else you would call Diesel breaking up a casket. Tatanka can't be around much longer after this as he's certainly not around for Wrestlemania and it's not like he's been interesting in years at this point.

And now, a new twist on the Billionaire Ted skits: Larry Fling Live on BNN (Billionaire News Network). After some stupid jokes, Randy from Sarasota and Terry from Tampa call in. Huckster needs time off because of a shoe to the eye. The third caller is Jane from Hanoi (Ted Turner's wife) and this goes nowhere. Larry brings up the

predatory practices that Vince whined about for months and Turner suddenly can't speak about all the charges against him. More next week.

Undertaker and Paul Bearer are angry/distraught to end the show.

Overall Rating: F+. What am I even watching anymore? I know they're getting ready for Wrestlemania but that doesn't mean everything is all ok. The Billionaire Ted skits, which are closing the show almost every week now, just aren't funny. They're basically Vince's therapy airing on TV and that doesn't make for good TV for anyone other than him. The wrestling is the mess that you would expect and these shows get worse and worse every single week.

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In Your House VI: Rage in the Cage (2013 Redo): Does Attempted Murder Count As A Heel Turn?

In Your House #6: Rage in the Cage

Date: February 18, 1996

Location: Louisville Gardens, Louisville, Kentucky

Attendance: 5,500

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

This is the final show before Wrestlemania XII, meaning almost everything has been set up for the show already. The main question is who will be facing whom for the world title. Other than Diesel vs. Bret tonight, there's also the case of who gets to face the winner for the title. As mentioned Shawn has won the right to fight for the title, but he also wants revenge against Owen Hart for putting him out, so tonight Shawn is putting his Wrestlemania title shot on the line for a shot at Owen. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the mindsets of Diesel and Bret and what role the Undertaker might play in the whole thing.

Vince and Jerry preview the show for us.

Razor Ramon vs. 1-2-3 Kid

This is a Crybaby Match, meaning the loser is put in a diaper. It's also the final encounter in a story that has run over two years and seen both guys turn at one point. The Kid also cost Razor the Intercontinental Title at the Rumble. He throws a diaper in Razor's face and gets punched in the face for his efforts before a big clothesline sends Kid flying over the top and out to the floor.

The Kid snaps Razor's throat over the top rope and comes back in with a springboard clothesline before kicking away in the corner to take over. A big spin kick takes Razor's head off and he fires off chops in the corner, only to be reversed into a big hiptoss to give Ramon control again. There's the fallaway slam but the Kid bails to the floor to escape the Razor's Edge. To play up the gimmick of the match, DiBiase slips the Kid some baby powder to throw in Razor's eyes (not a DQ for no apparent reason) to give the Kid two.

A pair of legdrops and a top rope splash gets another two count on Ramon and Kid hooks a sleeper. The hold stays on for almost three minutes but Razor finally fights up and crotches the Kid on the top rope for the break. Back up and Ramon scores with some right hands before rolling through a high cross body for two. Kid comes back with a big spin wheel kick for two but gets caught in a middle rope fallaway slam to knock him silly. DiBiase gives the Kid more powder but Razor kicks it into Kid's face before planting him with the Razor's Edge. He pulls Kid up at two though before hitting a second Edge for the pin.

Rating: C+. Not a bad match here and a good choice for an opener but the sleeper went on too long. This is one of those stories that went

on so long that it was hard to care about either guy at the end of it, but it got the Kid to a higher level than he would have been at otherwise which is a good sign. This was probably their best match in the entire story too.

Post match the Kid has a baby bottle poured down his throat, gets put in a diaper and covered in baby powder.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Duke Droese

Helmsley is accompanied by Elizabeth Hilden, a Penthouse Pet of the Year (not mentioned here of course). Droese is another of those one note characters, this time a wrestling garbage man. Helmsley cut Duke's hair recently so this is about revenge. Droese charges the ring and pounds away on Helmsley in the corner before slamming him down hard. Duke takes off his vest to whip Helmsley before booting him in the jaw.

A backdrop puts Helmsley down as Lawler hits on the Penthouse chick. Helmsley's Pedigree attempt is countered with an atomic drop and a clothesline puts him down again. Droese misses a charge and gets backdropped out to the floor, possibly injuring his shoulder. Helmsley whips him into the post for two and pounds away but Duke comes back for a slug out. A jumping knee to the face gets two on Droese and a snap suplex gets the same.

Helmsley charges into a boot in the corner and a double clothesline puts both guys down. The Penthouse girl is at least watching and seems to be interested in what's going on. That's all you can ask for with "celebrities" like her so I'll take what I can get. A spinebuster puts Helmsley down and a big backdrop does the same. There's a powerslam for no cover but Duke says it's time to take out the trash. He hits his tilt-a-whirl powerslam (the Trash Compactor) but goes to get his garbage can instead of covering. The referee throws it out but the distraction allows Helmsley to blast Duke with the can lid for the pin.

Rating: C-. Not terrible here with Droese having some nice power stuff in there. The story doesn't really work because it's such a low level idea but the hair cutting stuff from a few weeks ago gave it a personal touch. Not a great match or anything but it did its job well enough. Helmsley is getting some character development over the months too which is what he needs more than anything.

We recap the collapse of Camp Cornette, which culminated in the

British Bulldog accidentally hitting Yokozuna and costing them a tag match. Cornette berated Yokozuna after the match and the big man erupted, turning face in the process.

Yokozuna cuts his first promo ever, saying it's his time to take the spotlight from Cornette.

Yokozuna vs. British Bulldog

The big man slugs Bulldog down within seconds and there's a slam for good measure. Yokozuna misses an elbow drop though and Bulldog starts the very slow choking. It only lasts a few seconds though as Yokozuna crushes him in the corner but Cornette breaks up the Banzai Drop attempt. We get a VERY slow fight on the floor until Bulldog avoids a charge into the post and they head back inside. A top rope ax handle gets two for Smith but Yokozuna hits a quick (by comparison) Samoan drop, drawing in Cornette with a tennis racket shot for the DQ.

Rating: D. This didn't have time to go anywhere but what we got was as bad as it sounded. There's just nothing you can do with a guy Yokozuna's size unless you're a monster yourself. Smith is a powerful guy but he's hardly a giant. Nothing much to see here though but at least it was short.

Post match Yokozuna goes after Cornette until Vader, the new monster of Camp Cornette, comes out to slug Yokozuna down into the corner and handcuff him to the ropes. The beating ensues and goes on longer than it should have.

Goldust is on AOL for an interview and hits on the guy doing the typing.

We recap Shawn vs. Owen which we've covered for the most part. Owen is bragging about injuring Shawn's head but tonight Michaels is back and putting up his Wrestlemania title shot for a chance at revenge.

Shawn says this is the biggest match of his career because if he doesn't win, he can't achieve his destiny at Wrestlemania.

Owen Hart vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn comes in from the roof of the house set, dancing atop the garage. Feeling out process to start with Shawn sliding through Owen's legs and all the way out to the floor to show Owen up a bit. Michaels kisses a woman in the front row on the cheek, sending her nearly into delirium. Back in and Owen slides through the legs just

like Shawn did, only Michaels goes up top and dives to the floor to take Owen out. Back in and a top rope ax handle to the head gets two for Michaels.

Owen gets taken down with ease and Shawn walks up his back to show off even more. We hit a headlock for a bit with Shawn messing up Owen's hair. Owen gets a quick takedown but Shawn kicks him away, allowing both guys to nip up at the same time. A hurricanrana takes Owen down and Shawn pounds away, only to walk into a belly to belly suplex to give Owen his first advantage.

A neckbreaker gets two for Owen as he starts going after Shawn's head. Scratch that actually as Shawn has to kick out of a Sharpshooter attempt but gets caught in an armbar. The hold is shifted into a camel clutch before Owen gets two off a rollup. Off to a chinlock as the rest holds continue to abound. Back up and the spinwheel kick sends Shawn out to the floor, possibly injuring Shawn's head again.

Back in again and Shawn throws Hart to the floor and dives off the apron, only to get caught in a powerslam down to the floor. A missile dropkick gets two for Owen and Shawn is in big trouble. Shawn is whipped upside down in the corner and gets his head taken off with a hard clothesline for no cover. There's the Sharpshooter as Owen completely changes his offensive strategy for the sake of using a signature move.

Michaels is dragged back to the middle of the ring but finally grabs the bottom rope. Back up and Owen hits his enziguri, sending Shawn out to the floor and seemingly out on consciousness. Back in and Owen only gets a two count but Shawn comes back with a flying forearm to the head. He nips up and the energy is rolling. There's the top rope elbow and a right hand for Cornette before Sweet Chin Music sends Shawn to Wrestlemania.

Rating: B. This was good but it didn't hit the level they were going for. That being said, this was exactly what they were supposed to be doing with Shawn coming back from his injury and winning the match completely clean in the middle of the ring. Shawn was on a roll at this point and the fans were WAY into him.

Post match Shawn dances with an 8 year old girl in the ring. Nice moment.

Here's acting president Roddy Piper with something to say. He thinks

Michael Jackson is guilty (topical at the time) before officially announcing Shawn as #1 contender to the world title. Second he doesn't feel sorry for Yokozuna because he let himself get cuffed to the ropes. Piper thinks Vader is inbred and that his mask looks like a jockstrap. Vader vs. Yokozuna is officially made for Wrestlemania.

This brings out Cornette but Piper immediately cuts him off and demands respect. Cornette talks about how the old Piper was afraid of nothing but now he's afraid of Vader. Piper cuts him off again and says that if Vader loses at Wrestlemania, Cornette has to face Yokozuna one on one. This was a way to give the ring crew time to set up the cage.

WWF World Title: Diesel vs. Bret Hart

In a cage of course and you can win by escape only. Diesel pounds him into the corner to start but Bret comes back with right hands of his own, only to be shoved down with ease. The big man fires off more right hands in the corner before talking some trash. A HARD whip across the ring shakes the cage and Bret is in big trouble early. The champion slips away from Diesel, sending his head into the cage. Bret rams it in again and drops some elbows on Diesel's head. Very physical match so far.

Bret goes up but Diesel makes the stop and rams Bret back first into the cage wall. He tries to get out but Bret crotches him with the ropes and fires off even more right hands to the head. Neither guy can escape so Bret goes after the knee to slow Diesel down. Bret fights back up and clotheslines Hart down as Lawler wonders why they're not running to escape as soon as the other guy is down. A sidewalk slam puts Hart down again but he takes out the knee again to regain control.

Hart goes for the escape but only gets one leg out when Diesel makes another stop and launches Bret off the top rope in a slam. Diesel charges into a knee in the corner and gets bulldogged down but Bret can't follow up. We get another escape attempt by Bret but this time Diesel suplexes him down for the stop. They're getting a little repetitive here.

Diesel misses a charge in the corner and hurts his knee again, giving Bret an opening. The champion goes after the bad wheel and drops a middle rope elbow on it for good measure. Diesel counters a whip to give us the chest first buckle bump, which sounds AWESOME

here because of the cage shaking. The challenger pounds away with elbows in the corner but Bret kicks him in the knee for a breather.

Hart goes up again and gets all the way out of the cage but Diesel pulls him up by the hair in a painful looking sequence. Diesel stays on Bret's back by cannonballing down onto the spine, only to be rammed face first into the cage for his efforts. The big man pokes Hart in the eye and the fans are entirely in his corner at the moment.

Bret fights up and slugs away before taking Diesel down with the Russian legsweep. There's the middle rope elbow but Diesel pulls Bret down again to put both guys on the mat. Diesel goes for the door but the Undertaker pops up through the mat and pulls Diesel down under the ring. Smoke pours out of the hole as Bret climbs out to retain the title.

Rating: D+. This was a pretty boring match for the most part with a very repetitive sequence going on throughout the twenty minutes. Diesel needed to be more physical out there and this is one of the few instances where pinfalls could have helped a cage match. Diesel wasn't going to escape, but the threat of a Jackknife could have helped things out a lot.

Diesel and Undertaker crawl out of the hole with Diesel escaping from further torment.

Overall Rating: C-. It's a better show overall due to the really good Shawn match and some other nice stuff in between but it's still no classic. They're definitely getting the formula down though and things will be changing even more with the events of Wrestlemania. Better show here and thankfully these are getting much easier to sit through. That's a sign of the times in the WWF, which would actually lead to much darker days, which we'll get to soon enough.

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Monday Night Raw – February 5, 1996: They're Having Fun

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 5, 1996

Location: Civic Auditorium, Stockton, California

Attendance: 2,904

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're coming up on In Your House VI but unfortunately we're starting this month at the end of a taping cycle, meaning a burned out crowd and weak writing. The big story at the moment is the upcoming Bret Hart vs. Diesel cage match for the WWF World Title but Undertaker is looming as well. Let's get to it.

Shawn Michaels/Diesel vs. Yokozuna/British Bulldog

Vince and Jerry go out of their way to point out that Shawn and Diesel are undefeated as a team. Camp Cornette has been having problems of late so there are a few variables here. Shawn and the Bulldog have a posedown to start until they take turns sending each other to the floor. Yokozuna tries to sneak up on Shawn (as well as a 600+ man can sneak) so Diesel picks Shawn up and tosses him to knock Yokozuna down.

It's off to Diesel vs. Yokozuna as Vince plugs those stupid Billionaire Ted skits. A Samoan drop (You think Vince knows what to call that?) drops Diesel and Bulldog low bridges Shawn out to the floor. The delayed vertical suplex plants Shawn as the announcers play fantasy bookers about the World Title situation.

Back from a break with Shawn in more trouble (makes sense) and Yokozuna putting on a nerve hold. Shawn finally avoids the big splash and Diesel comes in to clean house. I know he's not the most popular booker but I've always enjoyed watching Nash do his big power stuff. Everything breaks down and Shawn superkicks Yokozuna to

the floor for the countout.

Rating: C-. Not terrible here and for once I can completely get the idea of not having someone get pinned. If they're setting up Yokozuna as a loser, it's a stretch to complain about getting pinned by Shawn so having him get knocked out because he's too fast is a smart way to go about it.

Post match Cornette yells at Yokozuna, who beats him up to turn face.

Someone is coming and he's missing part of an ear.

Hakushi vs. 1-2-3 Kid

This could be good. Feeling out process to start as neither guy wants to go too fast. Kid tries to spin around a bit and gets caught by a superkick underneath the chin. A quick toss to the floor has Hakushi in trouble and a flip dive over the top draws absolutely no reaction. I don't know if the crowd is just bored or what but that was SILENCE. We take a break and come back with Kid getting dropkicked out of the air to put both guys down. Another kick to the face puts the Kid on the floor and Hakushi follows him out with a nice dive. Back in and Hakushi goes up but gets butterfly superplexed back down for the pin.

Rating: B-. This got better near the end but that crowd reaction tells you a lot. You would think a match between two high fliers like these guys would have gotten at least some kind of a reaction, but when the Kid's feud is setting up a "loser wears a diaper" match, it's not the easiest thing in the world to get behind.

Clarence Mason is annoyed that Vader isn't reinstated and promises to sue the WWF.

Video of Vader attacking Gorilla Monsoon to earn himself a suspension.

Monsoon says his injuries will heal and apologizes to the fans for losing his cool. He knows Roddy Piper will be fine as interim boss.

WWF World Title: Undertaker vs. Bret Hart

If this doesn't wake them up, nothing will. Undertaker is challenging and throws Bret around to start before a headbutt gives us a stalemate. An uppercut puts Bret down and we hit the always stupid smother hold. Old School is loaded up but here's Diesel for a

distraction to break it up. Bret takes over as Diesel sits in for some commentary as this is still going slowly. It's time to go after the leg with Bret dropping elbows and wrapping it around the post.

Back from a break with Undertaker hitting a belly to back suplex and sending Bret into the barricade. Old School connects the second time but the referee gets bumped on the Tombstone attempt. Bret escapes into a rollup for no count and it's time to go back to the leg.

That's enough for Diesel as he jumps Bret from behind and Jackknifes Undertaker. We go to a second break and come back with....the match having ended during the break. Eh to be fair it was pretty much over already.

Rating: C+. It's a shame that triple threats weren't a thing in this company yet as this three way feud really deserved everyone fighting at the same time. It's interesting stuff and I get why they didn't want to have Undertaker do a job here, especially on a TV match. I can't complain much about a non-finish on Raw, though the fans might when Nitro had a title change two weeks earlier.

And now, a Billionaire Ted sketch to wrap things up. It's a press conference with Ted saying he'll do anything to put the WWF out of business while Nacho Man and Huckster try to fight each other. Ted doesn't care about losing millions of dollars of stockholders' money because he's just having fun. Maggle! These things are so petty and such an embarrassment.

The show was pre-empted on February 12 so next up is February 19.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was better here but this was actually the go home show for the pay per view due to the show not being on next week. In that sense this was a pretty strong show with four out of the five pay per view matches getting some time, which is a lot better than you would normally expect from Raw. The three way feud continues to have my attention but it's all just filling in time until Shawn gets the belt anyway.

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Smackdown – August 4, 2002: Just Like Raw

Smackdown

Date: April 4, 2002

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

After Monday's less than amazing debut for Raw, it's time to see if Smackdown can save the opening week of the Brand Split. This show has its share of stars including The Rock, Chris Jericho, Hulk Hogan and Kurt Angle. Those names alone should be enough to help carry this past Raw but this company has managed to disappoint me with less. Let's get to it.

Vince (dang I thought this was Smackdown) wishes us good evening. On Raw, Ric Flair picked Undertaker as #1 contender but that wasn't his right. Vince won the coin toss and the right to name the #1 contender, which he'll do tonight. It's really not a good sign that they're changing matches that fast.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to say he'd love to be #1 contender. That would make sense given how things have been going lately. Since the fans keep "dissing" him, he has a list of reasons why he should get the title shot.

1. He OWNS HHH.
2. He won an Olympic gold medal.
3. He is adored by children and senior citizens worldwide!

Before he can list off his other twenty six reasons, here's Chris Jericho to interrupt. Jericho's only rematch has been in a stupid triple threat match where Stephanie lost (true) and despite what the

people here think, he is NOT a has been. Jericho suggests a match for the #1 contendership and Kurt shakes his hand but the Rock comes out with something to say. There's only one man, AND THE ROCK MEANS ONE MAN who should face HHH for the title at Backlash. Rock doesn't actually say who that is because he thinks there might be someone else.

One day Rock will be WWF Champion but until then, no one deserves the shot more than Hulk Hogan. I know they're friends and all, but Rock saying Hogan should get a title shot after he beat Hogan at Wrestlemania and was drafted higher really doesn't feel right. Find another way to get Hogan in the title picture though as Rock saying it isn't working for me. After a double IT DOESN'T MATTER to Angle and Jericho and a poll from the crowd, Rock implores Vince to give Hogan the shot.

Earlier tonight, Albert confirmed that he was with Scotty for the Tag Team Title match.

Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Scotty 2 Hotty/Albert

Billy and Chuck are defending of course. We look at Rico talking to the announcers for some reason before Hotty takes Chuck down to start. Scotty takes things to another level by sending Chuck head first into Billy's....we'll say stomach. Chuck's offense doesn't last long as he eats a superkick and there's the hot tag to the Hip Hop Hippo (just go with it) to clean house. Albert gets distracted by Rico (never look directly at the sideburns) and the chase lets Rico sneak in and kick Scotty in the face so Billy can get the pin.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but you can almost see the post match heel turn from heel. It's not like they have a ton of midcard acts at the moment so one less nothing tag team isn't going to hurt anything. Albert is a former Intercontinental Champion so just let him beat up goons for a bit.

Post match, as expected, Albert beats the heck out of Scotty and says he put up with the dancing for six months.

Vince grabs Hogan the title shot.

Jericho freaks out and yells at Rock for getting Hogan the title shot. He brings up the great point that Hogan couldn't even win at Wrestlemania and Jericho beat Rock over and over. Rock suggests Jericho try to beat him tonight and an exchange of fisticuffs is

agreed upon.

Video on Christian's losing streak and ensuing tantrums. Diamond Dallas Page helped Christian break the streak but Christian attacked him after the match. Page then beat him at Wrestlemania and the biggest fit yet ensued.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian

Page monkey flips him to start as the announcers are already talking about Backlash. Christian gets in an elbow to the face and grabs a chinlock so this is probably going to be a short match. The reverse DDT gets two and Christian throws a fit, only to sucker Page in for the Unprettier and the pin.

Rating: D+. Who would have thought a match involving Christian freaking out would have psychology? Hopefully this moves Christian on to something else as Page really doesn't have much of a future due to his age and people not really caring about him in the WWF in the first place. The match was fine but I could go for something lasting a bit longer.

Kurt Angle thinks Hillbilly Jim should be President if Hogan gets the title shot. Edge comes up and says he feels bad about their recent problems. He's found some pictures of their good old days but of course there are jokes on the back, such as "You Suck", "Yes I Do Suck" and "And I'm A Dork." It's true, though thank goodness Edge was on the right side and Angle took the pictures when he did or this could have been embarrassing for Edge.

Here's HHH for his bi-weekly chat, this time about the new #1 contender. The more I look at that Undisputed Title, the less I like it by comparison to the original two belts. If nothing else the other two were bigger, as World Titles should be. HHH doesn't care if he's fighting Hogan because he'll fight Undertaker next. Cue Hogan in the red and yellow (first time in almost ten years in the WWF) to talk about....Wrestlemania I?

Then he moves on to Wrestlemania III (now with 94,000 people there) and Wrestlemania XVIII, both of which he thought would never be topped. Nothing is bigger than the title though (not exactly, as it wasn't even the biggest match at Wrestlemania) and HHH says it would be an honor to be in the ring with Hulk Hogan (Like he is now?).

In a bit of a twist, HHH says he's looked up to Hogan his whole

life. At Backlash though, he won't hesitate to hurt Hogan every way he can. Hogan thinks it's funny that everyone keeps declaring Hulkamania dead because it's going to rise up again at Backlash. A lot of posing takes us out as the serious HHH awkwardly leaves. Again: I get why they have to do something with Hogan while they can but this feels really forced.

Edge vs. Kurt Angle

I miss Never Gonna Stop. Kurt stomps him down and throws a good looking German suplex to start as the announcers talk about how amazing the previous segment was. In other words, they're probably putting it on the same level as the Rock vs. Hogan promo the previous month because in the WWF, HHH and Rock are total equals. Edge's half nelson facebuster gets him out of trouble for a bit and Angle gets tied in the ropes. Some spears (which still look lame coming from Edge) have him in even more trouble so he chairs Edge for the DQ.

Rating: D. Anytime this show wants to deliver a match that breaks four minutes, please let me know. This is a problem that the modern Brand Split is running into as well (Raw more than Smackdown): you don't have to put everything on every week. It's ok to alternate back and forth for a bit and let something get a little focus.

Edge fights Angle off.

Billy Kidman wishes luck to his ex-Torrie Wilson and her boyfriend Tajiri in their match later. Tajiri comes up and rants in Japanese. Just do the heel turn/split.

Cruiserweight Title: Kidman vs. Tajiri

Tajiri is defending. Kidman dropkicks him down to start and seems to be going fast, likely due to another lack of time. A kick to the head puts Kidman on the floor and there's an Asai moonsault for a very weak ECW chant. Back in and the tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb (nice counter) but Kidman can't hit the shooting star. The frustrated champion grabs his title and puts it in the corner, only to have Torrie take it away. Kidman uses the distraction to roll Tajiri up for the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. This felt like an Alliance era title change with the action having no meaning other than the forced angle at the end. Kidman winning the title doesn't really change anything but it's not

like the Cruiserweight Title means anything at this point. Splitting Torrie and Tajiri (pretty obvious at this point) probably won't lead anywhere and it's another story to add to the pile tonight.

Tajiri berates Torrie and leaves.

Vince is mad at Maven for costing Smackdown the Hardcore Title last week. His solution: send Hardcore Holly after him. Bob leaves and here's Stacy Keibler, ("Just call me Vince.") to offer the boss his services, which includes bending over in front of the camera. Wouldn't it make sense to bend over where Vince can see it?

Stacy loved Vince's talk about intellectual sperm and he likes the way she walks. They sit down and we go to a break, coming back with Vince fixing his clothes. Stacy is gone so here's D-Von to yell about splitting up the Dudley Boyz. He demands an explanation so Vince tells him to get out until he's ready to be a star. Did we just get three Vince segments in one? That's excessive even by his standards.

Al Snow gives Maven a pep talk by saying he would have had to get mugged to get the kind of beating Hardcore Holly is going to give him.

Hardcore Holly vs. Maven

Cole hypes up Rock vs. Jericho, which will have no titles on the line. Could that be because neither is a champion? Holly punches in the corner and does his kick to the "lower abdomen", only to miss a high cross body. Maven gets two off a missile dropkick but the Alabama Slam ends him in a hurry. I'm sure there was a point to this one somewhere.

We look at Rock challenging Jericho earlier in the night.

The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

They slug it out in the aisle to start and I'll let you guess who gets the better of it. Rock gets catapulted into the post for the great looking bump and they head inside for the opening bell. Right hands and a spinwheel kick get two for Chris as the announcers say Rock was just showing Hogan respect earlier. A Walls attempt is broken up and Jericho gets crotched on top to set up a superplex for Rock's first real offense.

Some of Rock's usual stuff gets a few near falls but there goes the referee. Rock grabs the Sharpshooter but here's Angle for the

interference. Not that it matters as Rock kicks out of the Angle Slam, Edge comes out to take care of Angle, and the Rock Bottom ends Jericho as a match finally breaks seven minutes.

Rating: C. The time and talent in the ring helped carry this but it felt like a way to get to the interference which likely sets up a tag match next week. Rock is in a weird place where he's so much better than anyone else that it's hard to imagine someone giving him a real challenge. That HHH feud just crippled Jericho as he feels like a glorified midcarder instead of a guy who was World Champion a month again.

Overall Rating: D. Put very simply, there's too much here. This could have been spread out over two weeks if not more, including too many turns and splits for a single show. I really don't get why wrestling companies feel the need to do this. It's not like there's a big season finale coming up. Just let these already established characters (keep in mind that they weren't anything new but rather just exclusive to one show or the other) act as they normally would instead of changing so suddenly. It doesn't feel right and makes for an overly packed show.

On top of that, you need some more wrestling. Like I mentioned multiple times, until the main event, nothing broke three and a half minutes. There really isn't a defense for something like that happening on a show with this much talent. Just Rock vs. Jericho alone could have eaten up twelve to fifteen minutes and you could have gut out something like Maven vs. Holly, which basically existed to say "hey, we're here too". Things will likely get better going forward but this was a big mess, somehow being just as bad as Raw.

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Ring of Honor TV – August 31, 2016: BJ Whitmer Is Good For Something!

Ring of Honor

Date: August 31, 2016

Location: 2300 Arena, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 850

Commentators: Matt Taven, Kevin Kelly

This is another show that's only kind of related to the main stories but there's a chance that we might get some new stuff this week. If nothing else there is a title match this week as the Addiction defends the Tag Team Titles against the Young Bucks. Last week's stand alone show was good so hopefully they can continue that trend here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Shane Taylor/Keith Lee vs. War Machine

Grudge match between two big teams. Kelly finally explains the story as Ray Rowe trained Taylor but Taylor turned on him and decided he was ready to be part of the better team. That's a story that is going to work every single time and it's fine here. Thankfully they don't even bother wrestling here as it's a huge brawl with Hanson dives onto Taylor, only to have Lee land on his feet to counter a monkey flip. The brawl heads outside with Lee and Hanson both being sent into barricades. War Machine starts getting the better of it with Rowe slamming Hanson onto Lee for a good looking crash.

Back in and Taylor slugs it out with Hanson, only to have Lee come over to really take over for the first time. We take a break and come back with Hanson on offense, only to get caught in something like a double chokeslam. A blind tag brings in Rowe and a springboard clothesline into a German suplex gets two on Lee. Rowe gets caught in an AA into a Jackhammer (that was SWEET) for two with

Hanson making the save. Lee somehow kicks out of a sitout powerbomb and a suplex into a sitout powerbomb puts Hanson away at 11:28.

Rating: B. This was the PERFECT way to book this match and I liked it more than I was expecting to. There was no reason to waste time with the regular tag stuff so they just had two teams beat the heck out of each other with one big power move after another. Sometimes you need to switch up the booking and go with what makes sense and that's exactly what we got here.

David Starr vs. Cheeseburger vs. Joey Daddiego vs. Tim Hughes

Bob Evans is on commentary and here's BJ Whitmer to sit in on commentary. The four guys in the ring do nothing interesting as we hear about BJ going around the world and eating a positive cookie. Starr dives onto Hughes and Evans and Daddiego throws Cheeseburger onto them as well. Hughes takes forever to give Cheeseburger a side slam as Whitmer keeps saying it's almost time.

The lights go out and we're told that the new Purple Haze is coming. Back in the ring and.....PUNISHER MARTINEZ IS BACK! House is cleaned for the no contest at 4:12 though we didn't see enough to rate. To be fair it was just background noise so Whitmer could bring out Martinez. I'm really happy with this guy being back but PLEASE don't let this be about Kevin Sullivan.

The Young Bucks promises a superkick party and kick the camera down.

Dalton Castle/The Boys vs. Cabinet

Coleman throws the Boys around so it's off to Castle for a chest thrust-off. Dalton sends him outside and then launches the Boys over the top onto the Cabinet, hopefully breaking some of the doors and handle off the thing so it goes away for a long time. Back from a break with Boy #1 (the announcers' words) getting triple teamed. King snaps #1's throat across the top and it's time for some twin magic, despite the Boys having different hair styles. The hot tag brings in Castle and of course everything breaks down. King kicks a lot and superplexes #2 to set up a guillotine legdrop/frog splash combo for the pin at 9:28.

Rating: D. The Cabinet couldn't be less interesting if their lives depended on it. They don't even have characters for the most part and it's just a single idea that is tied into pop culture. You would expect that from WWE instead of a "smarter" company like Ring of

Honor. The wrestling was watchable enough but I have no reason to care about the Cabinet and the live fans didn't seem impressed either.

Adam Cole is sick of Kyle O'Reilly and knows he's better because of the two World Title reigns.

Tag Team Titles: Addiction vs. Young Bucks

Veda Scott is on commentary. Addiction is defending and wait for the Bucks in the aisle. Therefore, since the Bucks are the best team ever, they sneak up on the Addiction, apparently just knowing the champs would be doing that. Daniels gets dropkicked in the face as we're waiting on the opening bell. Some tables are set up at ringside and it's Kazarian clotheslining the Bucks down to get a breather. A ladder is brought in as Veda suggests she could represent Taven on commentary if he gets even more injured.

Back from a break and I guess the bell rang while we were gone. Daniels breaks up More Bang For Your Buck by sending Nick off the top and through a table, followed by Matt slingshotting into a cutter for a near fall. Veda talks about the Bucks never beating the Addiction and that horrible voice makes it clear why she's rarely allowed to talk.

Daniels and Kazarian hit back to back to back to back Lionsaults and spinning legdrops for no cover as the heel champions wrestle like heels and the "heels" wrestle like the faces they really are. Matt finally flips off the top into a cutter of his own as the Bucks take over again. Nick's Swanton hits knees (feet but close enough) but Matt springboards into a DDT onto the apron to knock Kazarian silly. Hey, did you know that's the hardest part of the ring?

Daniels comes right back with a suicide dive but Angel's Wings is broken up with, you guessed it, a superkick. Cue Kamaitachi for a distraction but the Motor City Machine Guns come out (WAY too fast) for the save, only to have Nick dive onto the Guns. In the melee, Sabin accidentally hits Matt with the chair to give Daniels the pin at 9:15.

Rating: C. I'm not a fan of either team but it's not like the tag division exactly has a lot of options at the moment anyway. The match was a bit more reined in than most Bucks match and I'm glad that they're not going with the Bullet Club holding all of the titles at once, at least not so soon. I still have no idea why I'm

supposed to care about Kamaitachi other than he has something to do with New Japan and they're amazing or something.

Kevin Kelly calls this a travesty after talking about how the Bucks break the rules all the time. I'm not even going to bother complaining about it this time as you've heard it before.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked the opener and the booking of the main event was a nice plus so we can kind of overlook the boring Cabinet match. It also helps that the expectations are a bit lower because it's not a regular show with major storyline development, leaving us with just the wrestling to carry things. Good enough show here as ROH is getting a lot more steady, which is a really important step.

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Impact Wrestling – September 1, 2016: Ghosts Of Final Deletions Gone By

Impact Wrestling

Date: September 1, 2016

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

The countdown to Bound For Glory 2016 continues as we have five more

weeks before the biggest show of the year. Things have changed a bit coming out of last week as Drew Galloway has turned heel by attacking Aron Rex, likely setting up Rex's first feud and a Bound For Glory match. Let's get to it.

We open with Reby (who looks like Matt from behind) and the Hardys playing the piano and singing the Obsolete song. Even Senior Benjamin, Vanguard One and Maxill get in on the sing a long. Maxill's piano playing give Matt a pre-mo-nition that the battle with Decay will take place here at the Hardy Compound instead of at the Zone of Impact. Matt is worried but Reby has a sword to protect herself and Maxill.

In the arena (and out of that insanity), Mike Bennett and Maria are here for a chat. Mike is here to complete his kingdom of miracles by winning the World Title tonight. He's so successful because he surrounds himself with people like Maria and Moose, who Mike would like to come down to settle things. Instead here's Lashley to say he doesn't have to fake confidence like Bennett does.

Lashley is so confident that he's willing to let tonight's title match be No DQ. Bennett thinks Lashley is jealous of Moose and doesn't believe that they went to dinner last week. The champ says they did go to dinner (Are we on a Disney sitcom?) and maybe Lashley smartened him up a bit. Moose comes out to say he's let his actions do the talking and tonight he'll determine who wins the title. Bennett takes that as Moose saying he'll win but Moose says not so fast before leaving.

Matt Hardy vs. Crazy Steve

They look at each other to start because both of them are a bit insane. Steve dropkicks the knee out and we hit the chinlock. The fight goes outside with the fans telling Matt to DELETE him. So they want Steve to join Matt's team? Jeff hits Steve with a boot a few times and the Twist of Fate puts Steve away at 4:20.

Rating: D. I'm very bored with the Hardys anytime they're just having matches. The gimmick is so insane that it's entertaining at times and the second Final Deletion (you know that's coming) should

be fun but the actual wrestling is just Matt and Jeff looking old and boring. Steve continues to be more of a character than good but he works well with Abyss so that's a step up.

Post match Steve gets the mic and says Decay is at the Hardy Compound and Maxill is now Rosemary's baby.

The X-Division guys try to explain the X-Division and basically say it's about being fearless. So we can expect Nikki Bella showing up when?

After a break, Matt calls Reby (with his phone actually saying Broken Matt Hardy) but she doesn't answer. The camera in the Hardy Compound shows Rosemary looking at Maxill.

X-Division Title: Trevor Lee vs. DJZ vs. Andrew Everett vs. Mandrews vs. Braxton Sutter vs. Rockstar Spud

The title is vacant coming in and this is a gauntlet match, meaning people are added at fixed intervals but you can pull the title down at any time. Trevor Lee and DJZ start things off and they slug it out for a bit before pulling each other down. Andrew Everett is in third and the time intervals seem to be two and a half minutes. DJZ gets double teamed so the Helms Dynasty (minus Helms showing up lately) goes up at the same time.

A knee to DJZ's head knocks him silly but here's Mandrews to break up the title grab attempt. Mandrews gets thrown off the top though and we take a break. Back with a replay package of what we saw before the commercial instead of what we missed. Braxton Sutter entered during the break and here's Rockstar Spud to complete the field but it's still too early to get the title with Sutter making the save.

We hit the big streak of dives before people get back in, only to be thrown out or knocked down seconds later. There's nothing to talk about here as it's just one move or spot after another with nothing in between. Spud uses a chair to knock Sutter off the cables but it's the Helms Dynasty going up and grabbing the title at the same time. No one comes down with it though so DJZ springboards in

and pulls the title down to win at 16:23.

Rating: C+. I'm sure this is the revitalization that the X-Division has been needing for years now and that this will be different than the other half dozen times they've promised it's not going to be left by the wayside again. The same problems they always have still apply here: no characters, no storylines other than they all want the title and get thrown together into one match and nothing we haven't seen before. Fix some of those things and give us an actual story and the division might go somewhere.

Ethan Carter III is talking about his match last week when Eli Drake comes up to challenge him to a match tonight.

Drew Galloway promises an explanation.

We look at Allie accidentally winning the Knockouts Title last week. Here's Drew Galloway to explain his actions from last week. Drew says you don't know what you've got until it's gone. He's been asking why he stood up for TNA when he first arrived and he's not sure. When he won the World Title, the celebration went on for a week. Then Ethan Carter <http://ambienbuy.net> screwed him over three straight times but the fans cheered for him. Then Aron Rex showed up and said the same things he said in his debut but the fans were cheering for him anyway.

Rex wants to be the next Drew Galloway so Drew has to teach him a few things. This brings out Billy Corgan to say Drew's actions should earn him a suspension without pay but a little bird told him not to do it. Drew accuses Corgan of becoming the establishment and doing everything Dixie Carter tells him. Actually it was Rex who kept Drew from being suspended and here he is for the brawl but security quickly breaks it up. This was good stuff and Rex looked like a star who was on Drew's level.

Reby answers the phone and Matt says the match tonight was just a setup. She and Maxill will go to the safe room but Vanguard One tells Matt that Rosemary is already there.

Ethan Carter III vs. Eli Drake

Drake is nice enough to spell his name out before they head to the floor with Ethan in control. Back in and Drake takes over with your standard heel offense (I love listening to him talk but his wrestling isn't great) and escapes the TK3 attempt. A chinlock doesn't go very far and the second TK3 attempt connects just fine. The 1%er is enough for the pin on Drake at 6:00.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but there's nothing wrong with that. This was a main eventer beating a midcarder who got in some offense before losing. That's a simple booking plan and it works just fine with the big name getting a win over someone with credibility and the midcarder not losing any status because he was fighting a bigger star.

Allie is very excited about her title win and doesn't mind Maria making her plan her own celebration.

Reby tells Matt to get back here now. Senor Benjamin is holding Maxill.

DJZ celebrates his title win and says he's ready to defend it.

Here's Allie for her title celebration. Before she can get anywhere, here are Maria and Sienna to interrupt. Maria sends Sienna to the back and yells at Allie for thinking this is actually about her. Allie screws everything up and couldn't even get the right color balloons here. This celebration is for Allie's opponent and Allie needs to lay down right now.

Knockouts Title: Maria Kanellis vs. Allie

Allie lays down and Maria is the new champion in three seconds.

Allie has to fight back tears as she announces Maria as the new champion.

Bennett tries to talk Moose into doing the right thing and hands him a pipe. Moose thinks about it.

Rosemary torments Reby but Senor Benjamin gets Maxill out. Reby tells Benjamin to prepare the field for battle.

TNA World Title: Mike Bennett vs. Lashley

Lashley is defending and this is no DQ. The champ leapfrogs Bennett and does the delayed vertical suplex but here's Moose to offer a distraction as we take a break. Back with Bennett in control and kicking Lashley in the face. Maria hits Lashley in the head with the cast and the Knockouts Title but Lashley shrugs it off and suplexes Bennett for a breather. A torture rack (good move for Lashley) has Mike in trouble and a spinebuster makes it even worse. Maria breaks up the spear but Moose won't give Mike the pipe. The distraction allows the spear to connect to retain the title at 10:59.

Rating: C-. This was much more storyline development than an important match, which shouldn't be the case for a World Title match. Moose turning on Bennett this soon could be interesting but it's not like they've really been a unit long enough to give this much of an impact. Bennett never felt like a threat to the title here and that's not a good sign.

Post match Bennett yells at Moose and calls him a failed football player. Bennett slaps him in the face so Moose clotheslines Mike's head off to end the show.

Next week: Decay goes to Cameron. That's right: FINAL DELETION II!

Overall Rating: D+. I had forgotten how annoying it was to have the show cut back to the Hardy shenanigans every few minutes. It's not so much the story that gets annoying (though it can) but more the fact that they'll have something like eight segments (some very short) in two hours. You could stretch this stuff out for weeks but instead we see every few minutes and it's really easy to get burned out.

The rest of the show was just kind of there. The X-Division Title match was your standard showcase that isn't likely to lead anywhere, the main event was fine and....what else really happened here? Rex and Galloway brawled, we had a nothing match between Drake and Carter (it was fine enough) and we have Maria vs. Gail set up in a match that we've known was coming for months. I'm not sure why we're getting it but after all the time they've put into it they have to give it to us. This show wasn't terrible but it got tiresome by the

end, mainly due to the constant Hardy segments wearing me down.

Results

Matt Hardy b. Crazy Steve – Twist of Fate

DJZ b. Mandrews, Rockstar Spud, Trevor Lee, Andrew Everett and Braxton Sutter – DJZ pulled down the title

Ethan Carter III b. Eli Drake – 1%er

Maria Kanellis b. Allie – Allie laid down

Lashley b. Mike Bennett – Spear

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ECW on TNN – September 1, 2000: Unfortunately, Tournaments Are A Thing

ECW on TNN

Date: September 1, 2000

Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Commentators: Joel Gertner, Joey Styles

After last week, I'm really not sure what to expect from this show. This promotion goes from a fun wrestling show to some insane clip show with a bunch of wrestling that wasn't very good to set up an

angle that we've seen before. The next pay per view is in just over a month and I have no idea we're going to see on the way there. Let's get to it.

We see the end of Tajiri/Mikey Whipwreck advancing to the finals of the Tag Team Title tournament.

Opening sequence.

Joey and Joel are in the ring and the big arena does actually look cool. Joel does his rhyme about various escapades in each of the boroughs before Steve Corino comes out, flanked by Billy Corgan playing New York, New York on his guitar. I'm not sure how old school the Smashing Pumpkins were in 2000 but it's better than Limp Bizkit.

Corino is the new #1 contender (What about Jerry?) and refuses to apologize for cheating to pin New Jack, Dusty Rhodes and Tommy Dreamer. He's not going to apologize either when he pins Justin Credible. Cue Lou E. Dangerously and WHEN DID HE BECOME JUSTIN'S MANAGER? He's not Justin's manager? Well he certainly acts like him and that doesn't help because this company makes no sense half the time with all the people running around doing random promos to advance the overall angles.

Lou yells about wanting to beat Corgan up and wants the title shot at Anarchy Rulz. A fight is about to break out when Justin Credible "sneaks" (read as Corino clearly looks over his shoulder to see him coming in) in and canes Corino. Corgan actually chokes Justin with the cane until Lou hits him in the back of the head with the phone. Lou says that's a message from the Network. Ok so he works for the Network and not Justin? Really I'm not sure at this point and I don't particularly care either.

Tag Team Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Rhino/Justin Credible vs. Sandman/Chilly Willy

The winners get Jerry Lynn/Tommy Dreamer. A table is brought in less than ten seconds in but Sandman cleans house with the cane. Rhino shrugs them off and Gores Sandman through the table for two, followed by the piledriver to advance Credible and Rhino in less than two minutes. Did Willy stop for a taco?

Tag Team Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Simon and Swinger vs. Roadkill/Danny Doring

Roadkill starts fast with a powerslam on Simon but CW pulls Doring to the floor because almost every heel is part of a stable. A double Downward Spiral gets two on Doring but he grabs a double Bareback (Those names get annoying.) and makes the hot tag. Everything breaks down and Roadkill is thrown through a table, only to have Anderson hit Simon by mistake. Not that it matters as the Problem Solver puts Doring away and send Simon and Swinger to the finals.

Rating: D+. As much of a mess as most of ECW was at the end, they did have a good tag division going. Unfortunately we barely saw most of it as the matches were either clipped or had nothing on the line because of the ridiculous four month waiting period. Four weeks is a long time to not have champions but from April to September is unthinkable.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Tommy Dreamer/Jerry Lynn vs. Rhino/Justin Credible

Joined in progress with separate brawls in the crowd. They're nice enough to come back to the ring with Jerry dropping Justin but having to spank Francine instead of going for the pin. The Gore takes Dreamer out and there's a piledriver through the table. Little Spike Dudley comes in with an Acid Drop to Rhino and the cradle piledriver puts Justin away to send Dreamer/Lynn to the finals.

Rating: D. As usual, WAY too much going on to keep track of anything here and that gets annoying in a hurry. Why do so many matches have to go into the crowd in a wild brawl or have so many people interfering? Would a straight match every now and then, especially when we're coming up on a title shot, be too much to ask for?

Tag Team Titles: Tommy Dreamer/Jerry Lynn vs. Simon and Swinger vs. Tajiri/Mikey Whipwreck

The titles are vacant coming in and this is elimination rules. The Sinister Minister is the only manager present and Dreamer is in a neck brace. Tajiri, Lynn and Simon start things off with Simon sitting back while the other two start fast. Everyone tags out and the new three stare at each other for a bit.

Swinger stops to pose and gets put down by the physique-phobic Dreamer and Whipwreck. Everyone fights to the floor (of course) and Dreamer actually kicks Tajiri for a change of pace. Lynn takes Simon back inside for a bow and arrow hold. All six get inside again and it's time for double Tarantulas with Lynn and Mikey being stretched.

They're fine enough for stereo tornado DDT's for stereo two's on Simon and Swinger. Cue CW Anderson to hit Dreamer with something made of metal, setting up the Problem Solver for the elimination. The locker room comes out to watch as Tajiri mists Simon, setting up a Whippersnapper for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C-. This is the kind of match that I normally don't care for but at least it gives us something. Tajiri and Whipwreck are still a new team but at least they're a team instead of two people just thrown together for the sake of being thrown together. They're fine as the new champions, especially since they'll defend the titles against a strong tag division.

Everyone celebrates with the new champions.

Overall Rating: D+. It's like they were trying to show a tournament in one night but didn't have enough time. It was kind of confusing when they went from one round to the other and some brackets would have helped a lot. The finals being shown in full was the right move though and while I would have gone with Simon and Swinger, at least the titles aren't vacant like they've been since a few weeks after Wrestlemania.

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