

# Impact Wrestling – July 6, 2017: Let's Just Call It "The Company That's Going To Screw Stuff Up"

## Impact Wrestling

Date: July 6, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Jeremy Borash, D'Angelo Dinero

We're back stateside and past Slammiversary which saw Alberto El Patron become the new Impact Wrestling World Champion. However, it's also a new era as the company has rebranded as Global Force Wrestling. In theory the show is still called Impact Wrestling how in depth the changes go remains to be seen. Let's get to it.

LAX is in the clubhouse and Konnan says they're bringing the newest member tonight. It's going to be Alberto isn't it?

Recap of Slammiversary, making sure to get in that freaking owl.

Opening sequence.

Here's Alberto with his brother and father to open things up with a celebration. Apparently his brother is going to be in the ring soon and we'll get to see how talented this family really is. Alberto praises his father and talks about what it means to be World Champion. If anyone, even if they work for a different company, wants a shot, come get one. Cue Lashley to say the win meant nothing and to promise to build a wall around the family. Dos Caras slaps Lashley in the face but Alberto gets between them. The fight is scheduled for later.

Earlier today, Bruce Prichard yelled at the announcers, telling them to chill out and drop all the drama. Thanks for doing this THREE MONTHS AGO.

Two very large, muscular men known as the Swoll Mates, will be debuting

in two weeks.

### Caleb Konley vs. Sonjay Dutt

Non-title. Konley takes him into the corner and grabs an early cravate as they don't seem to have much time. A bodyscissors into a rollup gives Konley two and he smacks Dutt in the jaw for good measure. Konley charges into a pendulum kick in the corner and it's the tornado DDT to plant him hard. Dutt drops the top rope splash for the pin at 4:47.

**Rating:** D+. Just a match here with Dutt getting a win to further establish himself as champion. I'm also glad they didn't make this a title match as Konley hasn't won a match in the better part of ever and it wouldn't make a lot of sense to have him get a title shot so soon. Now we need an opponent not named Low Ki to go after the title.

Post match Trevor Lee comes in and drops Dutt before running away with the title. Lee declares himself the new champion.

Grado is back with an American flag and flanked by the Veterans of War and Eddie Edwards. They want to celebrate the Fourth of July in an eight man tag tonight because they're proud to be Americans. The four of them leave and a rather rotund man is doing Hindu squats.

### Eli Drake/Chris Adonis/Fallah Bahh/Mario Bokara vs. Veterans of War/Eddie Edwards/Grado

Adonis poses at the Swoll Mates on the way to the ring. Drake gets taken into the corner and thrown around by the Veterans of War. Adonis can't do much with Mayweather so here's Grado to get beaten into the corner. It's off to Eddie to kick Bahh off the apron but Mario escapes the Backpack Stunner. Everything breaks down and Grado elbows Bahh out to the floor. The MOAB drops Drake and there's the middle rope Codebreaker to Adonis. A quick Boston Knee Party ends Adonis at 4:36.

**Rating:** C-. So that happened. This felt like a way to get as many people into a match as possible in a match with little interest or drama. Eddie getting the win makes sense but I really could have gone for Drake getting put into a feud instead of just toiling in the midcard even more.

Use that guy's talents instead of just letting him flounder.

Post match here's Joseph Park to give Grado a letter, which really upsets him. Grado leaves with park and isn't happy.

### Braxton Sutter vs. Matt Sydal

Josh says Allie looks like an Easter Bunny and Braxton dresses like that guy from the 90s with three H's in his name. Super Heavyweight Hardcore Holly? Sutter chops him into the corner and fires off some knees. Something like a reverse Fameasser drops Sutter, followed by a kick to the head. Sydal drops the shooting star press for the pin at 3:17.

**Rating:** D+. Speaking of wasted talents, the fall (from not that high in the first place) of Sutter and Allie continues. What in the world is the point in having them lose this often when we're just a few months removed from one of the company's best moments in years? At least Sydal's push seems solid enough though and that's a good thing.

Sutter is frustrated after the loss and doesn't want Allie around him.

LAX doesn't say anything new.

JB is in the ring for the announcement of the Super X Cup, an eight person X Division tournament for a big trophy. The eight participants come out and we get the first round matches:

Sammy Guevara

Drago

ACH

Andrew Everett

Taiji Ishimori

Davey Richards

Dezmond Xavier

Idris Abraham

Video on Abraham.

Video on Xavier.

### Super X Cup First Round: Idris Abraham vs. Dezmond Xavier

Feeling out process to start with Xavier grabbing a headlock. Xavier starts flipping around until a running boot to the ribs cuts him off. Back from a break with Abraham still in control but a quick cutter takes him down. Xavier sends him face first into the turnbuckle and Abraham is stunned.

Back up and a deadlift German suplex drops Abraham but he kicks Desmond in the head. Not that it really matters as Xavier gets in a kick to the head of his own and Abraham is stunned even more. In a flash back to days of X-Division old, Spiral Tap puts Abraham away at 11:15.

**Rating:** C+. Fun match here between two guys we haven't seen around too often. Xavier was entertaining and it was nice to have someone fresh out there. The division is DYING for more talent and these two could be a decent place to start. Do more of this and give them some more time for a change.

Gail Kim has an announcement next week.

Video on Naomichi Marufuji.

Xavier says that finisher was the Final Flash. You'll see it again. For some reason the interviewer sounded like he was shouting from a long way off.

Moose is ready to defend against Marufuji next week but Ethan Carter III comes in to say he deserves a shot. Moose tells him to go to the back of the line.

### Rebel vs. Sienna

Non-title. Sienna throws her against the ropes to start and starts in with some hard kicks to the head. A charge misses in the corner but Sienna easily counters a handspring elbow into a German suplex. Sienna

gets two off a Samoan drop but Rebel knocks her into the corner for some running knees and elbows. The handspring splash staggers Sienna but Rebel dives onto KM. Back in and Sienna rolls her into the guillotine choke for the tap at 3:16.

**Rating:** D. Rebel may be rather fetching at times but she's not all that great in the ring. To be fair though this was only designed to be a squash so there's not much to get out of it. Sienna needs challengers and odds are that's going to be Gail before her retirement later in the year. Not a good match with time working against it.

The announcers run down next week's card.

#### GFW/Impact Wrestling World Title Alberto El Patron vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley is challenging and strikes away to start, knocking Alberto outside in the process. The champ gets sent into the steps and another hard whip sends him into the steps. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Alberto is backdropped to the floor, nearly hitting the post as we take a break.

Back with Alberto fighting out of another chinlock and firing off the kicks to the legs and a shot to the head. A big powerbomb plants the champ for two and Lashley is already starting to get frustrated. There's the Codebreaker to the arm but Lashley cuts him off with a spinebuster.

Alberto kicks him in the face though and gets two off a middle rope double stomp to the back. Lashley shrugs it off and sends the champ into the corner for a double stomp of his own, followed by the spear for no cover. Instead it's the Dominator but Lashley still won't cover. Not that it matters as LAX comes in to go after Lashley for the DQ at 15:03.

**Rating:** B-. This was as good as it was going to get though I'm not sure on having the new champ get beaten down this much. Also, Lashley needs to wrap up this feud and go on to do anything else for awhile. He's been in the title picture for too long and they need to bring in some fresh blood for a change.

Konnan says Alberto is the newest member of the team, though he's out of

it and doesn't acknowledge the announcement. They hold up his arm to end the show. Alberto didn't agree or pose with them or anything that would make this official.

**Overall Rating:** C-. If this was supposed to be the big new beginning, it really didn't come off as such. This felt like any given episode of the show with the GFW name barely being mentioned. Then again I'm not entirely sure even they know what the company is called at this point so you take what you can get.

The wrestling was hit and miss and the big angle at the end didn't do much for me, though at least it feels new. The X-Division getting more attention is nice, but it doesn't matter if it goes as it has so many times in the past (starts hot, fizzles in a hurry). It's not a bad show but they already seem to have lost the momentum and good energy that they had from the pay per view, which might be a record even for them.

### Results

Sonjay Dutt b. Caleb Konley – Top rope splash

Eddie Edwards/Grado/Veterans of War b. Fallah Bahh/Mario Bokara/Chris Adonis/Eli Drake – Boston Knee Party to Adonis

Matt Sydal b. Braxton Sutter – Shooting Star Press

Dezmond Xavier b. Idris Abraham – Final Flash

Sienna b. Rebel – Guillotine choke

Lashley b. Alberto El Patron via DQ when LAX interfered

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## 205 Live – July 4, 2017: Bad Old American Timing

### **205 Live**

Date: July 4, 2017

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

We're in the desert this week as the build towards Neville vs. Akira Tozawa for the Cruiserweight Title continues. It's hard to say what else we might be getting on this show, but there's a good chance that it's going to be more of Cedric Alexander vs. Noam Dar in the feud that won't die. Let's get to it.

Titus O'Neil is in the back talking to Akira Tozawa, who is over in Japan training. O'Neil runs into Ariya Daivari and Mustafa Ali, who he recruits and promises not to hit. Titus certainly has some great energy and he's a better fit as a manager than a horrible manager.

Opening sequence.

Announcers chat for a bit.

Here's Titus for a chat, including a clear podium and pictures of both Tozawa and Neville. Titus praises Neville but knows he'll be no match for the Power of Tozawa. This brings Neville out and we see the ending to last night's show with Braun Strowman destroying both Titus and Apollo Crews. Neville is cut off by a YOU'RE NOT STROWMAN chant but suggests

that Titus take a seat and watch what happens when he's mad at someone.

### Neville vs. Lince Dorado

Non-title and Titus sits in on commentary. There's something amusing about Dorado making his entrance while the ring crew takes the big carpet to the back. Neville powers him down to the mat to start but Dorado starts to flip around, including escaping a German suplex. A monkey flip drops Neville again as Joseph is now wearing Titus' sunglasses and hat. Neville gets pulled out to the floor in a heap for a hurricanrana off the apron but Dorado is sent knees first into the steps. Back in and Neville powerbombs him into the Rings of Saturn for the tap at 3:59.

**Rating:** C-. Just a squash here but I get one heck of a kick out of watching Neville just mauling people. Dorado isn't going to lose anything by getting beaten down by Neville, who basically does this to everyone. Whenever someone finally takes the title off of Neville, it's going to be a huge deal and it's because of matches like this one where Neville looks great.

TJP has requested a match with Rich Swann to get back on track with some friendly competition. He seems to be turning back to the good side.

### Jack Gallagher vs. Tony Nese

Nese poses at him to start and Gallagher makes the questionable choice to accept a test of strength. With that going nowhere, Jack takes him down for about five straight rolling crucifixes for the same number of near falls. Nese finally sends him hard into the ropes and hammers away to really take over. Jack gets tied in the Tree of Woe so Nese lays on his back and kicks away while doing situps at the same time. Sounds like the evolution of Scott Steiner.

Back up and Nese grabs a fireman's carry but bends Jack around his neck to grasp his hands, kind of like a reverse torture rack. Jack slips down and tries a cross armbreaker but Nese powers out again. Nese tries something like a Lionsault but tweaks his knee on the landing (Is anyone else getting tired of that?), setting up the headbutt and running dropkick to give Gallagher the pin at 6:09.



**Rating:** C. They had a story here with Nese getting a bit too flashy for the sake of showing off, allowing Gallagher to catch him in the end. All Gallagher needed was a single opening to get the win, which should help keep him strong in the feud with Brian Kendrick. That has some potential, especially after how good the feud with Tozawa was.

Post match here's Kendrick on screen, this time dressed like a stereotypical Revolutionary War Era Englishman. Kendrick lists off some dates in the American Revolution, all of which involve the English losing. Brian promises to rid 205 Live of the British scourge. Was this really the right idea on THE FOURTH OF JULY? The USA chants while the good guy, from England, is in the ring would suggest otherwise.

We look back at Cedric Alexander beating Noam Dar (yet AGAIN) last night on Raw.

Dar is getting his neck looked at and is told to keep icing it. Alicia Fox comes in and Dar talks about wanting the Cruiserweight Title. That is NOT cool with Fox who wants Dar to deal with Cedric. This better get some votes for Worst Feud of the Year because it's lasting longer and is more unpleasant than a bad fungus.

#### TJP vs. Rich Swann

They grapple to start with TJP grabbing a wristlock but getting taken down into an armbar. That's countered into a headscissors on the mat, only to have Swann pop up and flip over TJP for a running dropkick. The threat of a dive to the floor sends TJP running and Swann dabs a bit.

Swann misses a charge though and crashes out to the floor for a nine count, followed by an armbar back inside. Rich gets kicked down for trying a comeback as Joseph keeps calling TJP Perkins. If that's allowed, why not just call him TJ Perkins? I'm going to assume it's something stupid and move on. We hit a Muta Lock on Swann until a rope is grabbed, meaning it's time for the real comeback.

Rolling Thunder and a modified Michinoku Driver get two each but TJP is right back with a springboard forearm into a nipup. That just earns him a spinning kick to the head (Swann's former finisher) but TJP pops right

back up with the double chickenwing gutbuster for a near fall of his own. The kneebar is broken up so it's a double kick to the head to drop both guys. TJP's Detonation Kick is countered and we hit a pinfall reversal sequence with Swann reversing a sunset flip into a cradle for the pin at 12:17.

**Rating:** B. This was the kind of longer wrestling match you don't get often enough. They were playing up the idea that they knew each other so well and Swann just caught him in the end instead of really beating him. It's nice to see Swann getting a win here to get himself back on track, even if it's just in the short term.

They shake hands to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Sometimes you need an episode that barely focuses on the title, which is what happened here. Neville had a squash but Tozawa wasn't around and the champion's match was by far the shortest match of the night. There was also a good main event and that makes for an entertaining hour, though the Cedric vs. Dar stuff needs to crawl in a fire somewhere soon.

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# Monday Night Raw – February 3, 2003 (2017 Redo): I Waited Thirteen Years For This?

## Monday Night Raw

Date: February 3, 2003

Location: MCI Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's always cool to have a show from my birthday. We're coming up on No Way Out and that means HHH needs a challenger for the World Title. That will be set up tonight as Scott Steiner faces Chris Jericho in a #1 contenders match. Given that Steiner won at the Royal Rumble and JR immediately talked about there being NO WAY OUT, this shouldn't be too complicated. Let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff is in his limo in San Antonio to sign Steve Austin. Chief Morley is in charge tonight but they can't hear each other. I have no idea if this was supposed to be funny but egads we're in trouble if that's what passes for comedy. This was aired properly on the Network version but the Spanish audio bled over and drowned Bischoff out in the original broadcast.

Opening sequence.

Here are Stacy Keibler and Test, the former of whom is back from nearly being hit in the head by a chair. She says being hit was just an accident but she needs to be more careful. An apology from Chris Jericho would have made things better but Test wants Jericho out here right now.

This brings out Jericho to say he has more important things to worry about tonight. Test, showing the best acting skills of his career, says Jericho has five seconds to apologize or he's coming up the ramp. The

time passes but Christian comes in from behind to shove Test into Stacy. Test gets back up and beats the heck out of Christian before tending to Stacy.

Rob Van Dam and Kane nearly get into an argument over Kane leaving Van Dam last week. Kane goes into a rant about how Van Dam doesn't know what it's like to be him. Van Dam: "So all your power is in your mask?" Morley comes in and makes a match between the two of them for later.

Test and Stacy leave.

### Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

Hang on as Morley makes Rico guest referee. The Samoan Bucks hit double superkicks to start but Rosey misses a split legged moonsault. The Domsday Device drops Jamal for the slow two so they loads up 3D on Rosey. Not that it matters as Jamal grabs a rollup for the fastest count in recorded history and the pin.

With Spike's help, Rico gets put through a table.

Bischoff is trying to find Austin but doesn't have his address. He does however have a dumb limo driver who says he'll get Bischoff to Austin's house if he has the right address.

Back from a break with a countdown clock to Bischoff getting fired as they've entirely given up on the 30 days thing. They would have known that 30 days were up on a Wednesday so why not just say four weeks? Is a calendar too complicated of an idea?

Tommy Dreamer comes out for a match but HHH and company come out to destroy him instead. HHH says everything evolves and calls this group the greatest example of evolution in wrestling history. He brags about how awesome the whole team is and declares himself the one true diamond in the business. After introducing Batista, he describes Orton as the diamond. He really can't go three minutes without using the same terms to describe someone? They hammer in the evolution name again and wrap things up. Evolution is a good enough name and "Evolution has just passed you by" was a pretty solid catchphrase.

Steiner is ready to deal with Evolution the only way he knows how.  
Riddling them with math problems?

Evolution is in a private box.

Bischoff goes to a house and finds....someone named Buford, who tells him that Austin is at a bar in nearby Bandera. Somehow this takes three minutes.

### Victoria vs. Molly Holly

Non-title. Victoria goes for a full nelson to start but gets shouldered down without too much effort. The spinning side slam gives Victoria two but Molly slips out of the Widow's Peak. Molly can't hit the handspring elbow so the second attempt at the Widow's Peak puts her away in a hurry. Not bad while it lasted actually.

Post match Jazz comes in to take Molly out. Victoria gets in Jazz's face and Richards is shoved away but nothing happens.

Goldust tells Booker that if they don't win the Tag Team Titles back tonight, Booker needs to go his own way because the team is holding them back. Booker is all fired up to win the titles.

### Tag Team Titles: Booker T./Goldust vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Regal and Storm are defending. Goldust and Storm get things going and the drop down into the right hand puts Lance down. Booker comes in to stay on the arm as the announcers talk about the bar Bischoff is heading for. It's off to Regal who eats a forearm and kick to the face for two, followed by Goldust armdragging Storm down again.

Regal forearms Goldust in the back though and the evil champions take over. We hit the cravate to slow down an already slow match but Goldust fights up and cleans house on his own. The powerslam gets two as everything breaks down. Storm shoves Goldust into Booker though and a leg lariat gives Storm the clean pin to retain.

**Rating:** D. Goldust and Booker might be an entertaining team but they've gone ice cold in recent weeks. It doesn't help when Goldust is losing in

less than six minutes to a standard leg lariat. It's clear that the team is done at this point, save for a long form story to build them back up. The match wasn't very good but at least Booker doesn't lose any face at the end of the match.

Booker tells Goldust he has nothing to feel sorry about and agrees to go their separate ways. They hug and raise hands, despite the team really not needing to split up so soon.

Bischoff goes into the bar and gets laughed out of the room for ordering a martini. Naturally Austin has come and gone already, heading for another bar down the street. Given that, as of 2010, Bandera had a population of 827, I can't imagine that's a very long street so this shouldn't take the 15-20 minutes that it's likely going to take. I also can't imagine why a place with a smaller population than my neighborhood needs at least two bars.

#### Rob Van Dam vs. Kane

Kane clotheslines him during the finger poke for two and it's an early standoff. A spinning kick drops Kane but it's way too early for Rolling Thunder. Instead it's a no hands dive over the top to put them both down on the floor. Back in and Kane grabs a side slam for two but the chokeslam is broken up by a kick to the head. Now is the right time for Rolling Thunder with Kane sitting up and kicking Rob in the face. The top rope clothesline knocks Van Dam silly but it's just goldbricking so he can fire off more kicks. Not that they matter as here's Jeff Hardy to go after Rob for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. They didn't have time to go anywhere (a common theme tonight) and the ending was awful. Kane vs. Van Dam could be a good match/feud if they're given more than four minutes and something more of a story. They seemed to have some chemistry out there for a little while but Jeff coming in was a really lame idea.

Jeff gets demolished with the usual.

Booker can't find Goldust. Did Booker stop off for a taco and fish plate when they both left the arena earlier?

Post break, Jeff is still out in the ring when Shawn Michaels joins him. Since Chris Jericho already has something going on, Shawn is going to give Jeff some free advice. Jeff is frustrated and angry at the world. Shawn has been there before, like fifteen years ago (it was just over eleven) when he put Marty Jannetty through the barbershop window. Hardy is at the point where he needs to make a decision.

Shawn wants to know who Jeff Hardy is. Jeff needs to find out in a hurry, which doesn't seem to please him. Hardy promises to start taking people out, starting with Shawn. One Sweet Chin Music later and Jeff is out again. I have no idea how this is supposed to help Jeff and I don't think WWE does either.

Sean O'Haire doesn't think you should pay taxes.

#### Maven vs. D'Lo Brown

Feeling out process to start with Brown getting headlocked to the mat. Brown fights up for a bit but gets sent hard into the corner, allowing Maven to come back with the kind of offense you would expect from someone of his ability level. When your high spots are a dropkick and a backslide, you might not be ready for Raw. D'Lo avoids a missile dropkick and finishes with the Sky High.

**Rating:** D-. If they think this is the way to elevate Brown, they're better off with having Jeff Hardy take three finishers over two segments. The match was exactly what you would have expected here and that's not a good sign, especially with how boring a lot of this show has been so far.

Long tries to get a DOWN WITH THE BROWN chant going and gets....nothing, with JR pointing that out for us.

HHH sends Orton and Batista to deal with Steiner.

Bischoff goes into another bar, doesn't find Austin, gets insulted by a redneck and hits said redneck with a beer glass. Eric gives up trying to find Austin, making this whole thing completely pointless.

Orton and Batista find Goldust (Why couldn't Booker find him earlier?) and after making fun of him, beat him into the arena and toss him into

electrical equipment. Goldust is electrocuted and we get the serious voices as he does a stretcher job.

### Scott Steiner vs. Chris Jericho

Winner gets HHH at No Way Out. Jericho hides to start (probably his best idea) and gets one off an early rollup. They take turns hammering away in the corner with Steiner firing off the chops. A clothesline into the push-up elbow gets two but Chris grabs the referee to block an early belly to belly. They head outside with Steiner going into the steps (Steiner: "OW!") and Jericho cranks on both arms back inside.

Something like a powerslam drops Jericho though and there's the first belly to belly. A powerbomb gets two (with Steiner nearly dropping him) and Jericho rolls him up with his feet on the ropes for the same. The Walls don't last long (well duh) so Jericho snaps him throat first across the top. Steiner catches him on the top though and a super Samoan drop sends Steiner to the pay per view.

**Rating:** D. The match could have been much worse had Steiner been on offense any more than he was. This was as much of Jericho doing his thing and trying to hold things together as he could and that was their best option. They were also smart to keep this especially short as Steiner has proven to be untrustworthy in longer matches as of late. That being said, WHY IN THE WORLD ARE WE SEEING HHH VS. STEINER AGAIN????? How could anyone watch that mess and then expect it to be anything good the second time around? I know I say this company makes no sense but egads this is a really bad idea.

Vince comes in to see Morely and says if he's not impressed next week, Bischoff and Morely are fired.

**Overall Rating:** F. Between the horrible matches, the completely unnecessary splitting up of Goldust and Booker T., the wasting of any good feeling from the split for the sake of electrocuting Goldust and Hardy looking like a goof, I have no idea what positives happened on this show. The midcard is a disaster and we're looking at more HHH vs. Steiner, leaving me with one heck of a headache as we officially move into the Evolution era.



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## **KB's Review: Don't Break What You Won't Rebuild**

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-dont-break-wont-rebuild/>

Looking at WWE's rather stupid handling of characters when they change their minds in a hurry.

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## **NXT – July 5, 2017: Strong**

# vs. Style

## NXT

Date: July 5, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson

The title shows continue as we have the NXT Title on the line tonight. Bobby Roode has gotten far underneath the skin of Roderick Strong, including talking about Strong's wife. The title is up for grabs tonight with a ticked off Strong wanting both the title and a measure of revenge. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Strong and his family arrived earlier today.

## Sanity vs. Kassius Ohno/Hideo Itami

Alexander Wolfe and Killian Dain for Sanity here. Ohno blasts Wolfe into the corner to start and it's off to Itami for the kicks in the corner. Dain offers a distraction though and it's Wolfe snapping Itami across the top to take over as we take a break. Back with Itami still in trouble as Dain easily cuts the ring off to keep him down. Itami comes back with kicks and Ohno is ready for the tag but Itami doesn't even go near him. Instead it's a Falcon Arrow to Wolfe but Ohno gets knocked outside by Dain. The GTS knocks Wolfe silly, only to have Dain crossbody Itami for the pin at 9:44.

**Rating:** C+. Fine storyline advancement here with Itami wanting to prove himself to continue making up for his loss to Roode. I can go for the long form story like this, though I'm not sure where it's going to end. Itami might get a future title shot but a heel turn seems to be in his way first. Well, after a match with Ohno of course.

Ember Moon is training for her comeback at the Performance Center when Ruby Riot interrupts the mini press conference (in the Performance Center mind you) to say she should get the title shot instead. Moon doesn't seem

to mind.

We look back at the awesome Last Woman Standing match.

Video on Drew McIntyre.

Drew wants the winner of tonight's title match.

We look at DIY splitting.

Johnny Gargano is back next week.

Billie Kay and Peyton Royce were annoyed that Peyton was the only one to remember Billie's birthday when Andrade Cien Almas got into an argument with his unnamed female associate (Thea Trinidad).

Last week in an untelevised match, Bianca BelAir defeated Aliyah to qualify for the Mae Young Classic.

Video on Bobby Roode vs. Roderick Strong, which is the wealthy/powerful one vs. the family man who has worked to get here.

Strong has victory on his mind.

Roode says Strong is about to face reality.

NXT Title: Roderick Strong vs. Bobby Roode

Strong is challenging. Roode gets the better of an amateur exchange and does his GLORIOUS pose, earning himself a pair of dropkicks. A half nelson backbreaker drops the champ and we take an early break. Back with Roode grabbing a Blockbuster and stomping away, only to take another backbreaker.

Roode bails to the floor again but sends Strong's knee into the steps to take over. It's time to really work on the knee in the Ric Flair style, including a kick to the knee to cut off a comeback. We come back from a second break and come back with Strong kicking out of a leglock and sending Roode into the buckle.

The Angle Slam and another backbreaker give Strong two but Roode is right

back with a chop block to take over again. The knee is wrapped around the post but Strong catches him on the top and shoves the champ out to the floor in a crash. A quick Glorious DDT gets two on Roderick and you can feel the crowd getting into things again, mainly because they knew better than to buy one finisher as the pin.

Now it's Strong popping back up with knees to the face and a backbreaker for the pin....with Roode's foot underneath the ropes. That was a heck of a false finish with Strong all the way outside hugging his wife when he was told it wasn't over. Roode knocks him off the apron and hits a Glorious DDT on the floor (with a sneer at Strong's wife), followed by another inside to retain at 25:34.

**Rating:** B+. I've said this before and it's still true: Roode doesn't do anything flashy but he does everything so smoothly and simply that the style works. The leg work took away from Strong's backbreakers and the Sick Kick, throwing off his entire offense. Couple that with a false finish and Roode being the kind of jerk that glares at a man's wife before dumping him on his head and there's very little to complain about here. It seems that Drew is waiting for the title and that sounds like a great main event in Brooklyn. Strong is similar to Ohno back in May: a one off challenger who will go back into the midcard after a nice rub in the title scene.

Strong hugs his wife to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This was a lot of setting things up for later and that's all fine considering we already have the Authors of Pain vs. Heavy Machinery next week. The main event was over half of the show and that meant it had the time that it deserved. That's much better than the main shows where no matter what the main event is, it's rarely going to get more than fifteen minutes. Good show here with a really solid main event.

### Results

Sanity b. Kassius Ohno/Hideo Itami – Crossbody to Itami

Bobby Roode b. Roderick Strong – Glorious DDT

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## Watched GLOW and Read a Book

So as you've probably heard, the latest hot show on Netflix is GLOW (Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling), a dramatized story about the backstage workings of the comedy wrestling show of the same name from back in the 80s. The original was actually a hot show in syndication, though it was one of the dumbest things you'll find related to wrestling. I checked out the new series though and it's actually quite good.

The show is a drama built around how the show is put together and how the girls were brought in. It's certainly entertaining and goes by very fast (ten episodes, the longest of which doesn't even break forty minutes, meaning you can knock out the season in just a day), which helps fix a major flaw in a lot of these online originals: episodes basically being short movies instead of TV shows.

There are a bunch of wrestling cameos, with John Morrison, Brodus Clay, Carlito, Christopher Daniels and Kazarian as the most notable. That's the best wrestling stuff on the show though, as GLOW certainly wasn't known

for its in-ring product. They do a pretty entertaining job of showing how the training portion works though and that's always cool to see from an outsider's perspective.

Check the show out if you have the chance, but keep in mind that it is NOT PG. There's a bit of nudity, a lot of swearing and some rather adult plotlines. It's going to be around for at least another season and that's a good sign as it's one of the best depictions of wrestling I've seen in a very long time. It's worth seeing and given how fast you can go through the season, it's an easy watch.

On the other front, I recently received a rather nice Amazon gift card and spent a good chunk of it on a pile of wrestling books. The first one I finished off was Tim Hornbaker's Capitol Revolution, the story of the New York territory which of course became the WWE of today. This is a good choice if you want a look at the older days (it goes back to the 1920s and carries forward), which is a period that isn't often covered.

The book is rather detailed to start and covers a lot of the backstage nature of the territory. There are a lot of names that you might be familiar with (Toots Mondt, Strangler Lewis, Jess McMahon) and several you won't (who I won't list because, you know, they won't mean much to you). You get a good look at how the structure worked back then, which goes to show you how things tend to stay the same over the years. It's a very interesting look back at how the system used to work, which isn't something you get to see very often.

Now the problem is how fast the pace picks up. The book is less than 300 pages and the first two thirds or so cover the origins up until the rise of Bruno Sammartino. Then the speeds picks WAY up and we're suddenly at the Rock N Wrestling Connection era, which is where things wrap up. It feels like they hit a deadline and had to wrap things up instead of letting it build like they wanted it to. The majority of the book is very entertaining though and worth checking out, though I could have gone for a much longer edition. Still though, check it out if you like the historical aspect of wrestling.

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# Main Event – June 29, 2017: Where Heels Turn (For a Night At Least)

## Main Event

Date: June 29, 2017

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

We're in the big city this week as Main Event seems to be changing things up a bit, which is one of the best things that could happen. Just getting some fresh blood around here is a nice change of pace and it's always great to get away from some of the same repetitive names that frequent this show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Brian Kendrick vs. Cedric Alexander

Kendrick kicks him in the face at the bell and it's a very early Captain's Hook, sending Cedric bailing over to the ropes. A butterfly suplex gives Brian a one count but Cedric fights up and catches Kendrick with a spinning elbow to the head. The springboard clothesline gives Cedric two more and frustration is starting to set in. Kendrick kicks him in the face again but he can't get Sliced Bread #2 just yet. Instead it's a standing Spanish Fly into the Lumbar Check to give Cedric the pin at 5:57.

**Rating:** C-. They got a lot of stuff into this one and that makes the match more entertaining than it would be at normal speed. Kendrick has proven that he's one of the best in the division at putting people over and Cedric seems right at the brink of moving away from pack and getting up to the top of the cruiserweights. It would be better than dealing with

Dar at least.

From Raw.

Here's Roman Reigns to open things up and the WE WANT STROWMAN chants are already out in full force. Reigns: "If you let me get this out you might like this." He admits that he got choked out last week and Braun Strowman returned to pick the bones. The ambulance match is on and Reigns is ready to drive Strowman out of the building.

Cue an ambulance backing into the arena (I was hoping for a Scott Steiner cameo) so Reigns goes to investigate, only to find....no one in the back. Instead Strowman jumps him from behind and throws Roman onto the stage. Braun isn't done with him though and throws Roman back off the stage and against the ambulance. Reigns gets tossed into the ambulance with the doors closed without much effort.

We see the final portion of the gauntlet match with Sasha Banks finally slaying the monster Nia Jax. Alexa Bliss comes out for a staredown with Banks.

#### Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

Dash and Anderson start things off but Dawson tags himself in less than ten seconds later. Karl gets in a clothesline and drags Dawson over to Gallows but the Revival does their standard distraction to take over. Anderson and Gallows easily knock them to the floor though and we take a break.

Back with Dawson failing to fight out of trouble but a rake to the eye works a bit better. We hit an abdominal stretch and of course Wilder is there not only to grab the arm but also to switch places without a tag. That's SO Arn and Tully. Anderson kicks Dash in the face and makes the hot (?) tag off to Gallows for the house cleaning. The Magic Killer is broken up and another blind tag sets up the Shatter Machine to put Anderson away at 10:07.

**Rating:** C. I could watch Revival for days (all day, all night you might say) and seeing Anderson and Gallows as faces oddly worked here. It feels



like the fans want to cheer them and it's not like they're doing anything as heels. Why not try them out, especially if you have the Revival right there as heels?

We'll wrap it up with one more Raw clip.

Here's Paul Heyman to talk about Samoa Joe not fearing Brock Lesnar. Heyman could have taken a cheap shot at Joe in the back and been saved by everyone breaking it up but he'd rather have Lesnar do it himself. This brings out Lesnar but Joe grabs him from behind on the stage and puts on the Koquina Clutch. Lesnar turns purple but drives Joe into the video wall, only to get choked down again. The locker room comes out to break it up but Brock looks really shaken.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was one of the best Main Events I can remember in a good while. Both matches were fine and the stuff from Raw was especially good this week (throw in Enzo and Cass and it's even better). Somehow Great Balls of Fire is looking good and this show showcased that quite a bit.

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# Smackdown – July 4, 2017: Johnny Cena And the News

## Smackdown

Date: July 4, 2017

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Welcome home Johnny! After weeks of hype, John Cena is making his return to WWE TV tonight. This is the first time Cena has been seen since Wrestlemania XXXIII and there's no real indication of what he'll be doing. Since Cena can appear on either show, this might be something of note or just a glorified one off appearance. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Cena.

There's no time wasted as Cena is right here to open the show. The fans are all over him but he tells them to let him have it because he's WAY too fired up to be rattled tonight. Cena talks about the importance of Independence Day and talks about the American Dream (no not Dusty).

The same idea holds true here: everyone has a chance to come out here and compete with the best. Lately, a lot of people have been out here running their mouths talking about Cena going Hollywood and becoming little more than a part time mascot. Cena is an all-timer because he'll show up on Raw or Smackdown to face anyone from AJ Styles to Jinder Mahal to Seth Rollins to Roman Reigns and anyone in between.

Cue the returning Rusev to say he works just as hard in the ring as anyone but he hasn't had any commercials hyping up his return. The American Dream, just like Cena's return, is a joke. Rusev rips on the Fourth of July and gets drowned out with a USA chant. Cena issues a challenge for a Flag Match but Rusev says we do this on his time and his terms. Rusev walks away so Cena starts a USA chant/song. Cena beating up a foreigner on the Fourth of July is as much of a layup as you can have and that's perfectly acceptable.

Chad Gable and AJ Styles come in to see Daniel Bryan, who says Kevin Owens doesn't want either of them in the battle royal because he's beaten both of them. Bryan kind of agrees so the two of them will be fighting each other for the right to be in the battle royal instead.

### Chad Gable vs. AJ Styles

No Jason Jordan in sight. Feeling out process to start with AJ easily being taken down but popping up for his dropkick to send us to a break less than a minute and a half in. Back with AJ blocking a belly to belly superplex attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up but Gable misses a moonsault attempt. AJ gets the Calf Crusher for a bit but Gable twists out and plants him with a German suplex. Not that it matters as AJ is sent to the apron and hits the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin at 8:11.

**Rating:** C+. Better match than I was expecting here though I'm curious if Jordan is hurt or something. That's two singles matches for Gable in a row and we haven't seen American Alpha in the ring in at least a month. I hope they're not being split up or anything as Raw is dying for face teams and Alpha would be a great fit.

AJ helps him up post match.

Mojo Rawley looks at a Hype Bros shirt and doesn't seem pleased. Zack Ryder comes in and says it's cool because they're both in the battle royal. That seems to smooth things over a bit.

Here are Carmella and James Ellsworth to brag about winning Money in the Bank again. Carmella laughs off the idea of the fans having their wrongs righted last week and goes Rolling Stones with a little You Can't Always Get What You Want. Cue Naomi and the BELT HAS LED LIGHTS. That's up there with the spinner title on the dumb scale. Naomi says her eyes are always open so the cash-in won't work.

This brings out Daniel Bryan who tells Ellsworth to shut up. Due to what he did last week, he's banned from the arena again, but as a bonus he's fined \$10,000 and suspended for thirty days without pay. If he doesn't leave RIGHT NOW, Carmella loses the contract. They immediately leave, as you might expect. Thank goodness they addressed Ellsworth coming back in

last week. This should wrap it up too and that's the best thing possible.

#### Women's Title: Lana vs. Naomi

Naomi is defending and grabs her reverse Rings of Saturn for the tap out at 11 seconds.

Post match Tamina comes out to stare Naomi down and leaves with Lana. Nope. Don't even try to give Lana some kind of story or angle now. Not after you spend two months building her up with vignettes and then have her lose twice in less than a minute combined. I have no idea what the point was in building her up like that but if this is some nonsense about how she didn't work hard enough or whatever, screw off WWE and get your nonsense in order. Or, you know, WRITE HER OFF TV INSTEAD OF KILLING HER LIKE THIS.

Baron Corbin jumps Shinsuke Nakamura with the briefcase.

It's time for the Rap Off with rapper Wale in charge. Both the Usos and New Day have groups of people with them and trade insults about size, fake Jamaican accents, staying in your lane and the Usos being nothing until Naomi put them on Total Divas. A fight almost breaks out so Wale disqualifies the Usos to give New Day the win after nearly twelve minutes of rapping/rhyming back and forth. I know that's a short recap but there's really nothing else that can be said when it's just talking back and forth.

#### Randy Orton vs. Aiden English

Aiden gets annoyed at Randy for interrupting his song and jumps him from behind. Before he can sing again though, we hit a commercial. The match is joined in progress with Orton beating the heck out of English, including dropping him back first onto the announcers' table. The hanging DDT to the floor makes things even worse and Orton hits him with the steps for the DQ at 2:19.

English takes a post match RKO and here are Mahal and company with something to say. He talks about how everyone disrespects him because of the color of his skin but before he can speak Punjabi, Orton cuts him off

and threatens to RK0 Mahal back to India. Nobody likes Mahal because he's a jacka\*\*...and that's it.

Tye Dillinger is interviewed by Tyler Breeze in drag. Tyler, or Te-Nee Young asks what Tye is going to do to deal with the quadruple threat of Breezango. Dillinger gives a basic strategy and nearly runs into Fandango, who is wearing a fake mustache and dressed like a construction worker. Fandango and Breeze are of course bros forever, no matter how physical things get tonight. They've got something with this Breeze/Fandango things and that's likely grounds for running them into the ground asap.

Renee Young (who says Te-Nee Young was filling out the dress) interviews Mike and Maria Kanellis about the power of love. A noise interrupts them and it's Sami Zayn stretching. He talks about the Power of Love and goes into a discussion of Huey Louis and the News. As Sami wonders why you never hear about the News, his music hits and he has to run off. Maria is not pleased.

### Battle Royal

Sami Zayn, Konnor, Viktor, Dolph Ziggler, Luke Harper, Mojo Rawley, Zack Ryder, Erick Rowan, Fandango, Tyler Breeze, AJ Styles, Tye Dillinger, Sin Cara

Winner gets a shot at Kevin Owens, on commentary here, and the US Title at Battleground. I think I have everyone in there but that's always hard to pull off due to the constant camera cuts. Harper clotheslines Ziggler out before the vest can even come off. We take an early break and come back with Rowan eliminating Fandango.

Breeze is thrown to the apron and jumps into Fandango's arms before being placed back inside. That's fine with Rowan who dumps him a few seconds later. Harper knocks out Konnor but gets dumped by Rawley. We're down to Ryder, Rawley, Rowan, Dillinger, Styles and Zayn. The Hype Bros nearly get into it but team up to dump Rowan. Rawley throws Ryder out and says it's not personal. Ryder seems to take it personally though and doesn't seem to mind when Sami kicks Rawley out.

So we're down to three with Tye stomping on Styles and Sami, in increments of ten of course. Tye sends both of them to the apron but Sami backdrops Dillinger out to get us down to two. Sami grabs a quick exploder on Styles but misses the Helluva Kick and gets Pele Kicked out to give AJ the win at 11:18.

**Rating:** C. This was better than your average battle royal as they got rid of most of the nothing guys early and got down to people fans care about. Styles winning was obvious but they kept things moving and it was far from bad. The fans would have been happy with any of the final three so it was hardly torture.

Owens hits the ring and beats Styles down, only to have AJ knock him to the floor and hold up the title to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. Tonight was a completely skippable show, as it should have been on the major holiday. Save for Cena, who wasn't around after the first fifteen minutes, nothing of note happened here, assuming you count AJ getting the title shot as important. This was exactly what they should have done tonight though as no one was watching and it gives them a week to put some stuff together.

### Results

AJ Styles b. Chad Gable – Phenomenal Forearm

Naomi b. Lana – Reverse Rings of Saturn

Aiden English b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton used the steps

AJ Styles won a battle royal last eliminating Sami Zayn

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# Monday Night Raw – July 3, 2017: Let's (Get Ready to) Light It Up

## Monday Night Raw

Date: July 3, 2017

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

It's the go home show for Great Balls of Fire and the question becomes which match WWE is treating as the featured attraction tonight. In other words, it depends on if Brock Lesnar is here tonight or not, as tends to be the case all the time. Sunday's show is suddenly a bit more interesting amid rumors of Roman Reigns vs. Lesnar at Summerslam instead of Wrestlemania so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Enzo Amore pleading with Big Cass to keep the team together and Cass teasing to do so, only to lay Enzo out again. Still the absolutely right call.

Here's Enzo to open the show. He lists off all the bad things that have happened to him in the last year and says that all happened while Cass was behind his back. Cass watched all that time because he never had Enzo's back. Cass wanted to take advantage of the silver tongue but now he has to face the fists that come with it.

Enzo is grateful for everything that's happened to him and he'd shove his

dad down a wishing well before he joined the dark side. He's grateful to every kid out there wearing his gear. They're the people who help put food on his table because he believes in the good that he's doing. It's something you just can't teach. He walks in and out of a room with confidence because he knows who he is and he knows where he's going. He's been in holes a lot deeper than seven feet before and Cass is nothing more than a catchphrase that Enzo wrote.

Cass said his mouth writes checks that he can't back up but no one goes harder than him. Next time, don't be surprised if that merchandise check is for ZERO DIMES. Unless he starts wearing a Casshole shirt. Enzo is ready to go but comes back to say he's ready to fight on his own because it's all him now. This was an INCREDIBLE promo but there's not much of a way around the fact that he has nothing to back it up with in the ring.

Cass says Enzo can't talk the talk because on Sunday, he won't be walking at all. He's ready for Sunday but Enzo jumps him from behind and the fight is on. It's quickly broken up but that was some good fire.

#### Sasha Banks/Bayley vs. Nia Jax/Alexa Bliss

Nia throws Bayley into the corner to start but gets dropkicked a few times. That just earns Bayley a modified Snake Eyes so it's off to Banks for a double dropkick. Another dropkick puts Nia on the floor but she grabs Bayley off the apron and crushes her against the barricade. Back from a break with Bayley having been taken to the back from being crushed. Sasha stomps Alexa in the corner but Nia just crushes her with a backbreaker. Bliss stands on Banks' hair for a bit until Sasha fights up and kicks Jax in the knee. The Bank Statement ends Bliss out of nowhere at 10:15.

**Rating:** C-. I'd love to see how much further they could make Bayley look worthless. At this point they're setting her up for a heel turn and really, that's about all they can do for her as she's been treated as the biggest loser I've seen in a long time. Banks just beat the monster and the champ on her own but I'm supposed to care about Bayley? Really?

Braun Strowman tells Kurt Angle that he's dealing with Roman Reigns tonight.



Long video on Samoa Joe vs. Brock Lesnar with Brock saying he's not worried about Joe just because he put his hands on Heyman.

#### Noam Dar vs. Cedric Alexander

These two have spent more time being done fighting than they spent fighting in the first place. Alicia Fox makes her return and gets to see Cedric clothesline Dar to the floor. Back in and Dar gets in a kick to the chest for two. Dar starts in on the arm but Fox gets on the apron for an accidental distraction, allowing Cedric to hit the Lumbar Check for the pin at 2:09. NOW NEVER TALK TO EACH OTHER AGAIN.

We look at the attention the Ball Family got from their MizTV appearance last week. Ignore no one talking about wrestling and talking about Ball acting like an idiot but any publicity is good publicity right Vince? When is that Chris Benoit retrospective coming?

It's time for MizTV with Curtis Axel and Bo Dallas behind Miz and Maryse. Last week, Miz exposed the Ball Family as the overrated acts that they are and Lonzo will prove it again when he's an NBA bust. The only bigger bust than Lonzo is Dean Ambrose, who the Ball Family would be crazy to have as a representative. When Ambrose debuted, he was going to be the next Roddy Piper and the breakout star of the Shield. Now though, we know that Ambrose can't handle success. Dean is going to be the biggest joke in WWE but here he is to interrupt.

Ambrose wants his rematch for the Intercontinental Title and wants it tonight. Cue Heath Slater and Rhyno though with Heath saying he's never had a shot at a singles title in eight years. He's always telling his kids that he's got this and things will be ok but in reality, he has no idea if he's got this. Dean: "You've got kids?" Miz says no but here's Angle to say Miz is defending against Slater tonight and Ambrose on Sunday. Let's have tonight's match.....now.

#### Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Heath Slater

Miz is defending and wearing a suit while Ambrose is on commentary. Slater grabs a rollup to start but we go with a headlock to slow things down instead. Some right hands have Miz in trouble as Dean talks about

the delicious food that he hears Slater's wife makes at the trailer. Miz bails to the floor off an atomic drop and we take a break.

Back with Miz holding a front facelock and sending Heath outside where Rhyno and the Miztourage get in a staredown. Ambrose: "Miztourage. That's so bad. That's almost as bad as Great Balls of fire." Back in and Miz hits the YES Kicks until a flapjack takes him down. Slater slugs away and hits a jumping knee to the face for two.

The neckbreaker out of the corner gets two more and Slater powerslams him off the top for a nice counter. Rhyno goes after Dallas and Axel for getting on the apron to distract the referee, earning himself a posting. The distraction lets the Skull Crushing Finale retain the title at 12:48.

**Rating:** C+. Better than I was expecting here with Slater giving it a go but coming up short due to the numbers game. The Miztourage is a nice upgrade for Miz, who could only get so far with Maryse in his corner. Of course it doesn't matter as he's fighting Ambrose AGAIN, which feels like he's been going on for a year now.

Ambrose hits the ring for the save but gets beaten down as well.

We look back at Strowman taking Reigns out last week.

Titus O'Neil wants Apollo Crews to face Braun Strowman for the sake of his daughter. Crews actually falls for it with Titus saying the power of freaky daddy strength is enough to beat Strowman. If FREAKY DADDY STRENGTH isn't a shirt by Thursday, I worry about this promotion's future.

Here's Goldust to talk about his new film: the Shattered Truth. This film wouldn't be possible without everyone in this arena. All the little people you see. With this film, he's done the impossible and turned R-Truth into a star. The film is a highlight reel of last week's non-match, shot something like a trailer with footage from the cameraman Goldust brought with him. When the film is done, Truth is behind Goldust, munching on some popcorn. Goldust is quickly chased to the floor.

Sheamus and Cesaro come into Angle's office so he can give them their

stipulation for Sunday's title match against the Hardys: a thirty minute Iron Man match. EGADS are they trying to give me an aneurysm with these guys feuding forever?

### Seth Rollins vs. Curt Hawkins

Hawkins polls the fans on who is going to win here. After Rollins tells him to shut up, it's the windup jumping knee to the face for the pin at 9 seconds.

Post match Rollins grabs the mic and calls Bray Wyatt a coward. Whenever he's ready for a fight, Wyatt is nowhere to be seen. Wyatt always talks about how he's a god and ready to destroy everything but on Sunday, Seth is going to expose him for what he is. The only question will be if Bray is a man or a coward.

Samoa Joe and Brock Lesnar are live via satellite for a sitdown interview. Joe rants about being tired of answering questions because he's ready to fight. Lesnar calls him a coward but Joe says Brock can never get his hands on him. Joe is ready to fight so Lesnar lists off all the names he's beaten. That's fine with Joe, who has a list of names he's choked out. Lesnar and Heyman chuckle so Joe walks out and goes to find Brock. Angle tries to talk him down but security pulls Joe away from Lesnar's room. I know Joe loses on Sunday but this is the best build of a Lesnar opponent in longer than I can remember.

### Neville vs. Mustafa Ali

Non-title. Ali snaps off a running hurricanrana but it's too early for the inverted 450. Instead Neville loads up a reverse belly to back superplex, only to have Ali land on his feet. The running tornado DDT plants Neville for two but he shoves Ali off the top for a crash. Ali's head hits the barricade so Neville stomps away and tosses him into the air for the crash. For some reason Ali tries another rolling neckbreaker and eats a heck of a clothesline. The Rings of Saturn makes Ali tap at 6:20.

**Rating:** D+. The cruiserweights manage to kill another little piece of my soul. The matches are usually good but the show feels like it's coming to

a grinding halt whenever they show up. The 205 Live stuff is better but the matches here range from long to not interesting and that's not good when they happen twice a week most of the time.

Bray Wyatt is in the desert and talks about people worshiping the sun. It's been less than 100 days since Wrestlemania and things have been chaos ever since. The Beast has been made a mortal and there's no stopping Bray now. On Sunday, Rollins will learn what it's like to burn in the sun. This was as rambling of an interview as Bray has ever given and I have almost no idea what the point was supposed to be.

Bliss is leaving and says she let Sasha beat her as a strategy for Sunday.

### Finn Balor vs. Cesaro

The Hardys jump in on commentary as part of a continuing trend tonight. Cesaro powers Balor up and hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to take over. Some chops in the corner rock Cesaro but Balor gets thrown to the floor in a heap as we take a break. Back with Finn getting two off a sunset flip but Cesaro muscles him up with a gutwrench suplex.

Finn fights back and kicks Cesaro away, only to have Elias Samson come out for a distraction. Swiss Death gives Cesaro two and another uppercut rocks Finn. It doesn't rock him enough though as Finn kicks him off the apron. Samson breaks up a dive so the Hardys get off commentary to brawl with Samson and Sheamus. Finn dives onto everyone and we hit various finishers until Balor throws Cesaro back inside for the Coup de Grace and the pin at 15:05.

**Rating:** D+. I wasn't feeling this one but Cesaro and Sheamus have become a black hole of charisma and the Hardys aren't exactly helping things. At the same time the tag division continues to die, American Alpha continues to sit in the black hole underneath Smackdown and the Revival was on Main Event last week and will be again this week. Just throwing that out there.

We run down the pay per view card. "Order now and get two pay per views for FREE" is the best pitch they could have for the Network.

Here's an ambulance plus Braun Strowman to talk about how much he loves to hurt Roman Reigns. Titus O'Neil comes out to introduce Crews for the slaughter.

### Apollo Crews vs. Braun Strowman

Crews does what he can to start but is quickly thrown outside as soon as Strowman gets his hands on him. We hit the neck crank before Crews is sent outside again. Titus fires him up enough that two enziguris stagger Strowman. The standing moonsault is broken up with Strowman kicking Apollo across the ring in an awesome block. Three straight powerslams finally put Crews away at 4:13.

**Rating:** D. This was just a step above a squash and that's all it needed to be. Strowman is gearing up for the second biggest match at Sunday's pay per view and it makes sense to have him squash someone. At least it was someone fresh and not the same stuff we've seen a dozen times.

Post match Titus tries to save Apollo from a worse beating but takes one himself. Apollo gets thrown into the ambulance but it won't drive away. Of course Reigns is the driver (Thanks for having Crews' back earlier you jerk) and he spears Strowman off the stage. Strowman is on his feet before the show is over.

**Overall Rating:** D+. Tonight felt like one of the longest shows I can remember in a good while. Parts of it were good and they've actually done a solid job of building up what should have been a nothing pay per view. Lesnar vs. Joe looks like a blast and I'm sure the ambulance match will be fun too. The problem here was the wrestling, which really didn't do much for me and added even less to the show. It wasn't the worst show in the world but it needed a good match in there to help carry things.

### Results

Bayley/Sasha Banks b. Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax – Bank Statement to Bliss

Cedric Alexander b. Noam Dar – Lumbar Check

Miz b. Heath Slater – Skull Crushing Finale

Seth Rollins b. Curt Hawkins – Windup jumping knee

Neville b. Mustafa Ali – Rings of Saturn

Finn Balor b. Cesaro – Coup de Grace

Braun Strowman b. Apollo Crews – Powerslam

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Histories of Saturday Night's Main Event and Clash of the Champions, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/05/19/history-of-saturday-nights-main-event-and-clash-of-the-champions-now-in-paperback-plus-price-drops/>

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# **New Japan G1 Special in USA Night One: Welcome To Our Turf**

**New Japan G1 Special in USA Night One**

Date: July 1, 2017

Location: Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, Long Beach, California

Commentators: Jim Ross, Josh Barnett

This has the potential to be either a major moment in history or something that won't be remembered in a few years. New Japan has been the favorite promotion of a lot of wrestling fans in recent years and now they've come to America on their own instead of co-promoting with someone like Ring of Honor. This is the first of a two night event, the latter of which will air six days from now. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks back at the history of the company (not exactly in depth) and the build to the show. This includes a variety of big matches over both nights and how important it is for the competitors in a tournament for the inaugural IWGP United States Title.

Here are the tournament brackets:

Michael Elgin

Kenny Omega

Jay Lethal

Hangman Page

Juice Robinson

Zack Sabre Jr.

Tomohiro Ishii

Tetsuya Naito

We look at the tale of the tape for the World Title match between Kazuchika Okada and Cody Rhodes.

We get some pre-show ceremonies with the announcers talking over both the Japanese announcements and the English translations. This goes on for several minutes with the announcers talking about the tournament and making some predictions. If nothing else it's VERY weird to hear the term "belt" so many times.

Roppongi Vice/Will Ospreay/Briscoe Brothers vs. Young Bucks/Marty Scurll/Yujiro Takahashi/Bad Luck Fale

Chaos vs. Bullet Club, again. Ospreay and Scurll start things off because...well who else was going to? Scurll flips away from him a few times and does the bird wings thing a few times. Ospreay sends him outside and apparently we're under lucha rules (never mentioned by commentary) so it's off to the Briscoes to dropkick Fale down. Takahashi gets caught in between the Brothers, who JR has confused.

Mark hits his running Blockbuster off the apron and it's off to Roppongi Vice vs. the Bucks (And for once it's not something that you would know if you were watching New Japan because this is actually New Japan!). Vice takes over without much effort but there are the superkicks. Marty adds one from the apron and busts out the umbrella, allowing the Bucks to dive onto the Briscoes.

Ospreay kicks Scurll to the floor and there's the BIG springboard shooting star to take out the pile. Back in and Scurll breaks Mark's finger but the wild dancing and shouting CHICKENWING somehow tips Mark off about what to expect. Now it's Romero coming in to clean house...until a superkick cuts him off. In case that's not enough for you, Jay gets in a little comeback and eats a superkick as well.

Ospreay grabs a C4 on Scurll and it's back to Romero for the clotheslines in the corner. The clotheslines have no effect on Fale (duh) and he keeps walking forward despite Osprey hitting clothesline after clothesline for a cool visual. Fale shrugs it off and Razors Edges Romero onto the pile, though it knocks out some partners as well. The Briscoes drop Fale but it's the Bucks coming right back in to take over. The Meltzer driver is broken up and Romero rolls Matt up for the pin at 9:25.

**Rating:** B. Not the highest quality match but it was entertaining and fast paced, making it the perfect choice for an opener. This also helps set up Vice vs. Bucks for the Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles tomorrow night, which is almost always a good idea. I'm still not sure why Chaos and the Club are feuding but they've long since reached the point where they just are feuding so it's kind of hard to really complain anymore.

Los Ingobernables de Japon vs. Titan/Dragon Lee/Volador Jr./Jushin Thunder Liger



That would be Sanada/Bushi/Evil/Hiromu Takahashi, the first three of whom are the Never Openweight Six Man Tag Team Champions. The first three of their opponents are all from CMLL. If nothing else it's cool to hear Liger's music on TV. Finally, Titan is pronounced Tee-Tan as something that is likely lost in translation. Volador headscissors Bushi to the floor to start and it's off to Liger for a very nice reception.

Sanada comes in as well as we hear about JR seeing Liger facing Brian Pillman back in 1992. That's when Liger had been around NINE YEARS already, meaning he's now a thirty three year veteran. I really don't know what to say to that but it's rather impressive. Los Ingobernables sneak in from behind and clean house, knocking all of the villains to the floor. Sanada ties Titan up (ala Jack Gallagher) and hits a running dropkick, which isn't treated like a comedy spot as it would be over here.

Liger gets in a palm strike and makes the tag to Lee for a BIG chop off with Takahashi. The CMLL team hits double flip dives, leaving Lee to kick Takahashi in the face. Titan hand walks away and spins into a headscissors, only making himself dizzy in the process. That's some awful luck, or mal suerte to him. Titan gets triple dropkicked for two and Takahashi grabs the referee, allowing Evil to chair Titan down. The Time Bomb is good for the pin on Titan at 6:47.

**Rating:** D+. Nowhere near as good as the previous match here but the time didn't help things. This is another good example of a match that was helped by commentary as they were explaining why these factions were feuding, which mainly took place in Mexico. I don't need anything detailed as just telling me they've fought before and it was here or there helps quite a bit. The action was fun and while I didn't know some of the guys, it was entertaining enough.

#### IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Jay Lethal vs. Hangman Page

The belt is big and rather ugly. Lethal has bad ribs coming in thanks to Silas Young and Beer City Bruiser. Page jumps him at the bell but Lethal is right back up with a suicide dive (not "drive" Josh). They head inside

with Lethal missing a moonsault and getting kicked in the bad ribs. Well at least Page isn't doing anything stupid. As I say that, he hits a shooting star shoulder off the apron in what is the best example of an unnecessary flip I've seen in a good while.

Back in and Lethal kicks him in the ribs but it's WAY too early for the Lethal Injection. Instead it's something like an Octopus Hold until Lethal escapes for some kicks to the head. Jay hits his top rope elbow but hurts the ribs again, allowing Page to get up at two. The front flip clothesline gives Page two but he gets caught in the Lethal Combination. The Lethal Injection almost completely misses though and both guys are down. I'm not sure why Page is but that's not the biggest deal. Lethal kicks him in the head again and NOW the Injection connects full on for the pin at 8:24.

**Rating:** C-. This felt really off and almost like a highlight reel or clipped version of a much longer match. Lethal and Page are two of the ROH guys I like more than usual and you would expect better chemistry between them. Maybe it's the injured ribs but I'm not sure if that's enough to excuse the blown spots and general lack of flow to the match. They just weren't on the same page and it felt like they were wrestling two very different matches.

#### IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Juice Robinson

JR thinks Sabre is Ospreay. Eh I've gotten them confused before too. The fans are already singing for Sabre, making me think they're all evil foreigners. Well maybe save for those chanting for Juice. After a brief feeling out process to start, Sabre wastes no time in going after the arm with a variety of holds that I can't even begin to name.

Robinson escapes the third straight hold (all of which looked like they should have broken the arm), eventually getting Zack up in a fireman's carry for a gutbuster. Zack rolls him up for two and it's time to kick at the arm a few more times. Robinson tells him to bring it on so Zack kicks away.

Something like a triangle choke has Robinson in more trouble but he

powerbombs his way to freedom (AMERICAN freedom that is). Back up and Robinson tries an Unprettier but gets reversed into an Octopus Hold with the arm being cranked at a CRAZY angle. The other arm is pulled back as well until it's a full nelson with Zack's leg between Robinson's arms (I told you his holds were hard to call) for the tap at 10:06.

**Rating:** C+. Sabre is an interesting guy as he's the best technician I've seen since Daniel Bryan (if not before) and that makes for some very fun matches. That being said, he's also so dominant that it's hard to imagine him losing, which makes things a bit worse. Now that being said, if there's ever a time for him to lose, it's in a tournament. Robinson continues to show WAY more upside than he did in NXT so maybe it just wasn't a good fit down there. I've liked enough of what I've seen from him so far outside of Orlando so there seems to be potential there.

David Finlay/Jay White/Kushida/Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Sho Tanaka/Yohei Komatsu/Yoshi Hashi/Billy Gunn

Yes THAT Billy Gunn and yes he's challenging THAT Hiroshi Tanahashi for the Intercontinental Title. Kushida gets quite the reception and it's time for the eight way staredown to start. Yohei and Kushida start things off with Kushida easily taking him down and offering a SUCK IT to Gunn. Finlay comes in to dropkick Tanaka but the ring is quickly cleared, leaving Sho to dropkick Kushida in the back.

Sho grabs a bodyscissors before it's off to Gunn for one of the louder reactions of the night. A quick crotch chop sets up a staredown with Tanahashi before it's back to Sho to do the majority of the work. Kushida fights them off because the Tempura Boyz Tanaka and Komatsu don't seem all that great. Tanahashi comes in off the hot tag and forearms Gunn down with his bad arm.

Gunn completely fails to catch him off a crossbody throws in a SUCK IT, and goes down off his half of a double clothesline. White comes in to grab a suplex on Tatsu but gets caught with a spinwheel kick. A suplex into the corner drops Tatsu and everything breaks down. Tanahashi hits the Sling Blade on Gunn and it's White left in the ring for a Flatliner to put Tatsu away at 9:43.

**Rating:** D. This match has the one obvious question: why in the name of tree bark is Gunn getting the title shot? Star power? That's not exactly something this show is lacking and I have a really hard time believing that New Japan would have issues getting someone better in the ring and with more star power than Gunn to challenge Tanahashi. Throw Gunn into the tournament and let one of the people from there (Page maybe) have the shot instead. It really doesn't look good otherwise and the match could be a major mess, especially when you consider what Tanahashi is capable of.

A long celebration takes us to intermission, which features a look at the main event, a look at the Tag Team Title match and a recap of the night's matches so far. This runs just under twenty minutes.

#### Tag Team Titles: War Machine vs. Guerillas of Destiny

War Machine is challenging in a rematch from Dominion where they lost the belts. JR says War Machine are SEVEN TIME ROH Tag Team Champions, which makes me think one of two things: JR is drunk or he looked at their Wikipedia page, saw that they had seven successful title defenses in their ONE reign with the titles, and didn't bother checking what he was reading.

Before the match, Ray Rowe wants to make it a No DQ match and it's immediately on. The four of them head outside without wasting a second with the champs getting more fired up every time they take a shot to the face. JR goes into a weird rambling speech about having nothing to say, followed by Barnett taking over with play by play. Did he drop his notes there or something? A trashcan shot stops Rowe's suicide dive and the champs work him over in the ring.

Rowe takes a neckbreaker and splash for two but Hanson remembers that he's in the match and makes the save. About fifteen straight running clotheslines in the corner crush the champs again, prompting JR to talk about....Hanson's beard? The Bronco Buster misses though and it's time for the big slugout with War Machine throwing Tama around until Loa powerslams Hanson out of the air. A Swan Dive into a frog splash gets two on Rowe but Hanson is back in.

Fallout is loaded up but here's fellow Bullet Club member Chase Owens to take out Hanson with a chair. JR sounds rather annoyed about the lack of disqualifications, which isn't exactly like him. Rowe gets powerbombed through two chairs (Can Hanson just not take a big bump tonight?) but Hanson is here to save Rowe from going through a table. Fallout through the table ends Loa to give us new champions at 11:07.

**Rating:** B-. Sometimes you need four strong guys to beat the heck out of each other for a little over ten minutes. War Machine is a fun team and the Guerillas are the kind of team who can be right back due to pure charisma. A good power brawl is hard to come by and I had fun watching them beating on each other. Entertaining match and a nice change of pace to a lot of the other stuff on here.

#### IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Tetsuya Naito vs. Tomohiro Ishii

Naito jumps him from behind during the entrances, setting up the charge into the pose on the mat for a VERY strong reaction. After we hit the stall button to start, Ishii hammers Naito like he stole something, including the loud chops. Naito thinks it's a good idea to chop a guy named the Stone Pitbull (who I didn't realize was shorter than Naito), earning himself another beating.

Back up and Naito tries again for the same result. Must be a Ric Flair fan. A hiptoss and running dropkick to the back of the head work a bit better and it's time to pose. Ishii suplexes him down and blasts Naito with a suplex. A powerslam nearly drops Naito on his head for two but he pops right back up with a missile dropkick for a breather.

Ishii's suplex is countered into a DDT (always liked that counter) and a top rope hurricanrana gets two. Naito walks around for a good while...and then spits at Ishii. I get that he's confident but sweet goodness that seems unwise. One heck of a headbutt drops Naito and a powerbomb cuts him in half.

A hard clothesline gives Ishii two more but his brainbuster is countered, eventually into a tornado DDT. Destino is broken up so Naito kicks him in the head again, only to get caught by the sliding lariat. A dragon suplex

gives Naito two but it's a clothesline into the brainbuster to advance Ishii at 15:53.

**Rating:** B. They had a good story here with Naito being able to hang with Ishii on his own but getting too cocky and showing the lack of respect that a monster like Ishii deserved. It's a good way to make Ishii a big deal as pinning a former World Champion always will be. I liked this a lot more than the other Ishii matches I've seen so it was a nice surprise, though I tend to like Naito matches.

#### IWGP United States Title Tournament First Round: Michael Elgin vs. Kenny Omega

Omega has the Bucks with him as usual and is playing the full on face here despite still being a heel (officially). They try to get the referee to do Too Sweet but he offers a crotch chop instead. Elgin powers him (Omega, not the referee) into the corner to start before some forearms and kicks earn Kenny a wave of the finger. Kenny still can't do anything with the monster so Elgin chops him for a change.

The delayed vertical suplex has Kenny reeling but an Elite chant brings him back so he can do the Rise of the Terminator deal (still don't get it and don't really care to know). Back in and one heck of a top rope shoulder sends Omega flying across the ring and out to the floor. Omega hits a moonsault from the apron...and Elgin casually catches him because he can.

Kenny slams him onto the apron for a nineteen count and we hit the chinlock to slow things down a bit. Elgin raises his knees to block a middle rope moonsault as JR calls the Bucks very annoying. That might be the understatement of the year. A powerslam pulls Kenny out of the air for a close two (ignore the spitting onto the mat during the cover). Elgin powers him up again but gets caught in a snap dragon suplex to send him outside.

That means a big flip dive followed by a jumping knee to Elgin's face, only to have one heck of a clothesline take Omega's head off. They fight to the apron for a hard German suplex to drop Elgin on his head for a scary looking crash. Back in and a super crucifix bomb gives Elgin two

more, prompting JR to ask the obvious: if that doesn't work, what will?

Well nothing more than likely, but you have to be used to some big (and arguably ridiculous) kickouts around here. Three straight jumping knees to the head knock Elgin silly and a package Tombstone gets two. There's another running knee and the One Winged Angel sends Omega on at 22:36.

**Rating:** A-. I liked this a bit more than a lot of the Omega matches I've seen, mainly because it wasn't far longer than it really needed to be (and it won't be called 25% better than the best matches of all time). They had another good story here with Elgin using pure power while Omega was more well rounded and therefore capable of adapting to counter whatever Elgin threw at him. Omega is very good and it's fun watching him, face/heel issues aside (which is more a company/stable thing than anything else).

Here are tomorrow's final four:

Jay Lethal

Kenny Omega

Tomohiro Ishii

Zack Sabre Jr.

We recap Cody vs. Kazuchika Okada. It's a short story with Cody challenging Okada for the title right after Okada's draw against Omega at Dominion. Okada went with it because...well that's what wrestlers do.

IWGP World Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Cody

Cody is challenging and comes out with a bunch of people in ex-President masks. Brandi Rhodes is with him (still absolutely stunning) in an American flag outfit and lights a cigar for him. After a kiss from Brandi (with his right shoulder taped up), we're ready to go with a slow start, which means this is likely going long. Okada takes him to the mat and then to the ropes where he gives Cody a friendly pat on the chest.

That warrants a break for another kiss, followed by heading back inside

for a standoff. They head outside to speed things up with Okada hitting a running dive over the barricade, only to have Cody go after the knee to take over. Cody chokes with his boot but Okada neckbreakers his way out.

Back up and a fast running elbow to the jaw followed by a DDT lets Okada nip up. The signature dropkick knocks Cody off the top and out to the floor in a heap. A DDT on the floor makes things even worse but Okada can't follow up, meaning it's a long count. Back in and Cody runs the corner for a super armdrag (looked like a C4 2000 at first) but the Disaster Kick is countered into a flapjack (cool).

There's the top rope elbow, only to have Cody grab the Trailer Hitch to go back to the knee. The hold is broken and a slap fires Okada up all over again, prompting a mudhole stomping in the corner. The jumping Tombstone and a pair of Rainmakers drop Cody. Cue Omega with a towel like Cody was teasing at Dominion but Brandi says no.

This brings out the Bucks to ask what Omega is doing and Okada nails another dropkick. Naturally Cody hits a Rainmaker of his own for two, followed by Okada grabbing his own Cross Rhodes. So now that we're back to even with the stolen finishers, Cody gets two more off an inverted DDT. To really mess with his boss, Cody loads up the One Winged Angel, which is quickly reversed into a German suplex. The jumping Tombstone (yes another one) sets up the Rainmaker to retain the title at 27:12.

**Rating:** B+. I liked the Omega match a bit more but Cody is a bit more of a generic style than Elgin being awesome with the power. Okada is still very smooth in the ring, though I do think he uses his big moves a bit too often. That being said, it was an excellent match with both guys hitting their big spots. Omega vs. Cody could be interesting, assuming it's not just a swerve for later. Very good main event, even though I didn't quite buy Cody as the biggest threat to the title.

Post match Okada poses but Omega gets in too. He won't take the night from Okada, even though he wanted to main event this show. They'll meet again in the G1 and tonight is Okada's. Gedo and Okada both say they're awesome and Okada will make it rain strong style around the world.

At the post show press conference....I have no idea as I don't speak



Japanese.

A highlight reel ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** A-. This was a very good show and that's the best thing that could have happened. It's not a masterpiece or a classic but for what was basically a pay per view in front of a small crowd, it worked as well as it could have. They showcased most of their stars and the two major matches were both outstanding. Couple that with this airing at 8pm EST and on free TV, it's hard to find anything major to complain about. Maybe a little bit could have been cut (as in like 10-15 minutes, or the Tanahashi eight man tag) but the time really wasn't a problem.

The one thing that needs to be remembered though is this is one match. Based on this, New Japan isn't going to overtake WWE or become the hottest thing in American wrestling. It's a very good night but they need to do it again (as in beyond night two) for it to mean much. It's a very good show though and they're off to a great start in America. Now build on that and keep it at (or really near for that matter) this level and we'll see where things go. Strong debut though.

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