

2017 Awards: Rookie/Newcomer of the Year

You have to restock the shelves somehow.

Over time, wrestling fans are going to get bored with the current crop of talent. Seeing them every single week is going to cause you to stop caring about them at some point, which means that enough is enough and it's time for a change (thanks Owen). Therefore, today we're looking at the best rookies and newcomers of the year.

Just to clarify, this isn't someone we haven't seen before but rather someone who made their debut on a new roster. You can barely ever find a true rookie and it would give you quite a shallow talent pool to pick from.

We'll start in developmental with one of the latest names to become a big deal off of Tough Enough. Patrick Clark is now named the Velveteen Dream and while that sounds like a stupid name and gimmick on paper, Dream has turned it into one of the most entertaining things around NXT. On top of that he had one of the best matches of the year against Aleister Black and there's a very high place on this list for him.

If there's one thing WWE knows how to do, it's book the heck out of a monster. That's what they have with Lars Sullivan and he's one of the best I've seen in years about running through people with reckless abandon. Just don't let him talk and he could be one of the best monsters NXT has had since Bray Wyatt.

We'll stick with NXT (shocking I know) and look at Aleister Black. While he might not talk very much, Black lets his fighting do the talking, including that awesome Black Mass kick. Couple that with his amazing presentation and the sweet entrance and there's no way Black won't look awesome. He can

kick your head off and look awesome doing it. If he's not NXT Champion by the end of the year, I'll be rather surprised.

This was actually a really hard pick and it took me a long time to make up my mind between this one and the winner. Pete Dunne is one of the best young stars I've seen in a very long time. He has an incredible look and has some great matches to go with it, all in his early 20s. My only criticism of him is we don't see enough of him, which is the case with almost all of the British guys. He's outstanding and there are a lot of people I'd love to see him against on the NXT roster. Give us more.

You really can't say Dunne without going with Tyler Bate as well. Those two have beaten the heck out of each other in three straight up classics (even Jim Cornette loved them) and you can't have a great match without a great opponent. Bate is just 20 years old and that alone makes him an amazing newcomer.

As great as all of those people have been, the big one for me is still Samoa Joe. Not only did he debut and start a pretty dominant feud against Seth Rollins, but he moved on to become a big time Roman Reigns antagonist, plus there was that whole main eventing a pay per view against Brock Lesnar and then being in the main event of Summerslam. Joe should have been in WWE about ten years ago but better late than never, especially when you have such a high level of awesome.

Monday Night Raw – February

14, 2000: 12 Year Old KB Was Stupid

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 14, 2000

Location: San Jose Arena, San Jose, California

Attendance: 13,300

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is on my request list and I'm actually making an effort to clear the thing out a little bit. We're coming up on No Way Out 2000, meaning HHH is still trying to fend off Cactus Jack, who wants to fight him inside the Cell. I'm really not sure why this show was requested but it's a good time for the company with the Radicalz freshly on the roster. Let's get to it.

If you're not familiar with this time, I've already done the February 7 show, which you can check out here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/08/17/monday-night-raw-february-7-2000-this-show-is-so-excellent-i-dont-have-a-catchy-title-for-it/>

Also of note: this aired at 11pm due to the Westminster Dog Show. It still flattened Nitro.

Opening sequence.

I miss that pyro. But hey, we need to cut every cost ever right?

Here are the freshly heel Radicalz (with Eddie's wrecked arm in a sling) for a chat but they're cut off by fellow heels DX. Stephanie, far before she had the confidence to back up her voice, tells us to listen up and then shut up. We see a clip from Smackdown of Kane attacking his ex-girlfriend Tori.

Stephanie blames the fans for egging Kane on because it was their reactions that made him tombstone her. If it's suffering the people want, it's suffering they'll get tonight. HHH is tired of people accusing them

of being too light on their adversaries so tonight, the real punishment begins. They'll start with Too Cool, including Grandmaster Sexay vs. Road Dogg and Scotty 2 Hotty vs. Billy Gunn. That brings him to Dean Malenko and Perry Saturn, who will go 2-1 against Rikishi. The only one left is Rock, who gets to face Chris Benoit.

With everyone else out of the way, HHH thinks Kane needs to learn about respect for women. Kane needs to learn that women are his equal and he can't chokeslam them, even if he doesn't quite have the X Factor to please a woman like Tori. Therefore, to teach him a lesson, it's going to be Kane vs. X-Pac in a no holds barred match at No Way Out. X-Pac isn't happy but HHH has a stipulation: to get X-Pac, Kane has to beat HHH and a mystery partner in a No DQ match tonight. Cue all the good guys mentioned here to clean house.

Edge vs. D-Von Dudley vs. Jeff Hardy

The winner's team gets a Tag Team Title shot at No Way Out. Edge and Jeff get together for some Poetry in Motion on D-Von as Bubba yells at JR about putting BB (a woman who wasn't around very long) through a table. D-Von fights back and drops an elbow on Jeff for two, only to have Edge missile dropkick both of them down.

The partners try to get involved but it's Bubba getting suplexed on the floor for his efforts. The announcers get Jeff and Matt confused (I did the same for years) as Jeff hits a Twist of Fate into the Swanton for two on D-Von. Edge spears Jeff down but gets caught in the reverse implant DDT to give D-Von the fast pin.

Rating: D+. This was just a means to an end but it's still kind of weird to see D-Von in a singles match. The Dudleys were still pretty new around this point but it was time for them to move up the ranks in a hurry. The tag division was about to take off and this was one of the first major steps to get us there.

Mark Henry and Mae Young get a hotel suite for Valentine's Day and make it the honeymoon suite, much to the desk clerk's shock and awe.

Road Dogg vs. Grandmaster Sexay

Dogg breaks up the rather lengthy dancing but gets caught in what would become known as the Skull Crushing Finale for his efforts. Back in and Dogg gets to do some dancing, only to charge into a boot in the corner. A bulldog is broken up though as Sexay is crotchted in the corner, followed by a running kick to the head for good measure. Sexay is right back up and crotches Dogg on the top to even things out a bit. The Hip Hop Drop misses though and Dogg's pumphandle slam is good for the pin.

Rating: D. Not much here but what are you expecting from these two in a singles match? There's a reason that they were put into teams more often than not and that was rather evident here. Dogg was a great talker but once he had to be in the ring, a lot of his talents were exposed in a hurry.

Mark carries Mae over the threshold and we get a Do Not Disturb tag on the door.

Godfather/D'Lo Brown vs. Al Snow/Steve Blackman

Godfather does his full entrance and it's kind of amazing to think this airs on the same show that we see today. In the back, Snow is trying to hypnotize Blackman into having an interesting personality. Godfather offers Blackman the ladies but gets turned down, setting off a HEAD CHEESE chant. Snow and Godfather get things going with Al avoiding a running elbow. A kick to the back cuts Godfather off as Lawler oogles the ladies. Blackman comes in and kicks Brown down but stops to yell at Snow for carousing with the women. The distraction lets Brown get a sunset flip for the pin, giving Snow and Blackman their first loss.

Mark and Mae get romantic with talks of getting into something more comfortable.

Here's European Champion (and still relative newcomer) Kurt Angle to talk about how much better Europe is since he won the title. The economy is up, suicide rates are down and tourism is up 16.4%. Whereas in America, the stock market has collapsed and towns like San Jose continue to fall into a deeper depression.

Those falls coincide with Chris Jericho becoming Intercontinental

Champion so Angle needs to intervene. Therefore, Angle wants a title shot at No Way Out so he can save America. Angle wants Jericho to come out now but when there's no Chris, Kurt goes into a rant about Chyna being on the Tonight Show in a rather low cut outfit. He was on the Tonight Show after the Olympics but didn't embarrass himself because of a little thing called the 3 I's.

Before he can list them off though, here's Jericho (who has only been around about six months himself) to interrupt. Jericho heard Angle talking about America falling into a depression but all Angle is doing is make America fall asleep. The brawl is on with Jericho getting the better of it until referees break it up. Cue Chyna to DDT Angle on the floor and celebrate with Jericho. Really strong segment here as you could feel the fire from these two young, hungry and talented guys. Once they threw Benoit in, the combinations just never stopped working.

Mark is in bed and Mae comes out in some lingerie. Shall we say, snuggling ensues and Lawler is almost sick in his crown.

Chris Benoit vs. The Rock

Eddie is in Benoit's corner. They slug it out to start with Benoit hammering away in the corner but getting punched down for his efforts. A swinging neckbreaker gets two but Eddie grabs the foot to give Benoit an opening. Rock's arm goes into the post and there's a chair to the back to keep him in trouble. They're keeping this one pretty simple so far and that's the right idea with a TV match. It's certainly better than throwing a pay per view level match for free on Raw with all of a few hours' build.

Back in and we hit a cross armbreaker on Rock but Benoit lets it go in short order. A belly to back suplex gets two but Rock grabs a DDT. Eddie is up on the apron in short order though and there's no count. There is a right hand to Eddie's jaw however, allowing Benoit to slap on the Crossface. JR swears there's no way out of the hold, naturally just a few seconds before Rock makes the rope.

The Samoan drop puts Benoit down again as Rock continues to just use basic punches and power moves while Benoit comes up with 28 ways to

torture you per match. They fight to the floor where Big Show sneaks in (somehow) and knocks Rock into a German suplex for the pin.

Rating: B-. It's nice to have some good wrestling, even if it has to be interrupted by Big Show. Rock and Benoit always had nice chemistry together and that made for some solid stuff until we got to the storyline ending. Rock is the kind of guy who can wrestle any kind of opponent and make his offense work. Couple that with a submission master and Rock's good selling and there's almost no way this could go bad.

Rock gets laid out post match.

Show, still looking muscular, says there's no way out for Rock at No Way Out. He's going to Wrestlemania, hallelujah.

Mark and Mae are in bed and it's time to exchange gifts. Mae gets chocolates and Mark gets...oh good grief I remember this...edible underwear. Thankfully the camera stays up as she puts them on. The lights go off and....Mark: "TUTTI-FRUITY!" I...yeah move on. TO ANYTHING ELSE!

Billy Gunn vs. Scotty 2 Hotty

Gunn, with the appropriate lips on his gear, punches Scotty down in the corner to start. The running bulldog sets up the Worm but since it's just a chop, Billy is right back up with a Jackhammer. Dogg distracts the referee for no apparent reason though, allowing Grandmaster to get in a right hand to give Scotty the fluke pin.

The Outlaws' music plays for some reason. Was Too Cool's not fun enough or something?

Light Heavyweight Title: Crash Holly vs. Essa Rios

Rios is defending here, having won the title last night on Sunday Night Heat in his debut. Also of note, 12 year old KB loved Rios but thought Lita was holding him back. Hardcore sits in on commentary and says this is the start of a move away from being super heavyweights. They trade bouncing armdrags to start until Essa gets two off a tornado DDT. Crash sends him throat first into the ropes and pounds away before missing a charge in the corner. Lita even grabs a hurricanrana on the floor to

quite the reaction. Yeah no future for her whatsoever. Back in and the moonsault retains the title.

Lita adds her own moonsault with Rios counting the pin. Ok so I might have been wrong on this one.

Post break the Hollys are still in the ring with Hardcore saying he's going to show Crash how it's done.

Hardcore Holly vs. Tazz

Tazz only debuted less than a month ago. Holly jumps him during the entrance and raises a boot in the corner to stop a charge. A powerslam gives Holly two as the announcers talk about gimmicks. Barbecue sauce is NOT a gimmick by the way, but it might not be able to make Mae's gift delicious. Holly's dropkick lets him pose but Tazz grabs a suplex. The Tazmission goes on but Crash comes in for the DQ.

Crash gets beaten up for the third time tonight.

Rikishi Phatu vs. Perry Saturn/Dean Malenko

The villains jump him at the same time to start and quickly eat a double clothesline. A one man 3D drops Malenko and Saturn takes a Samoan drop. That means a double Stinkface but Saturn is back up with a superkick to take over. Rikishi reverses a double suplex but nearly drops both of them on his own attempt. That really didn't look good, though Rikishi was never quite known for his power. The Rikishi Driver (a sitout Tombstone instead of over the shoulder but still great looking) knocks Malenko silly and a belly to belly drops Saturn. Rikishi loads up the Banzai Drop but Eddie comes in with a pipe to the leg for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This was actually better than I was expecting (botched double suplex aside) with serious Rikishi still being somewhat awesome at times. That Rikishi Driver still looked great and some of the power stuff Rikishi could do worked well enough. I could have gone with the Radicalz not basically being squashed so soon after debuting though and that's not a great sign for their futures.

The Radicalz work on the leg even more until Too Cool makes the save.

Kane vs. HHH/???

No DQ and if Kane wins, he gets X-Pac at No Way Out. The mystery partner is....not X-Pac, who comes out just before the real partner: Big Show. Kane has to slug away at everyone to start and Show breaks up an early chokeslam attempt. We settle down to the big men starting things off with Kane shrugging off some right hands.

JR talks about Show "shocking the world" earlier tonight when he cost Rock a match earlier. I don't know if he even shocked half of the arena Jim. The fans are logically chanting for Rock as HHH stomps Kane down in the corner. The facebuster and jumping knee put Kane down as we're just waiting for Rock here. Kane slugs away until a DDT pulls him down for two. Show comes back in for the elbows in the corner as the announcers debate whether or not Kane should have Tombstoned Tori.

Kane fights back on HHH with a big boot, followed by a jumping clothesline to Big Show. A low blow cuts HHH down and X-Pac throws in a chair but here's Rock....who is immediately chokeslammed. X-Pac comes in to help with the beatdown but Cactus Jack comes in for the real save (running Tori over in the process). Rock chairs Show into a chokeslam for the pin. JR: "BIG SHOW WINS IT! BIG SHOW FACES X-PAC AT NO WAY OUT!" Lawler: "NO! KANE WON!" JR: "KANE WON!" Geez dude.

Rating: D+. Screwy commentary at the end aside, this was perfectly fine with everything you would expect it to have been. When the fans have figured out what's coming for the ending it's probably not the best idea in the world, but at least it's only a few minutes long. There's no need to stretch this out for longer than it needed to go and they didn't do that here. Not a bad match but really just there to serve a single purpose.

The good guys clean house to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a good example of how building to a pay per view used to work. Look at how many stories (some better than others) were advanced here. A lot of them were set up in the first segment but as the show went on, the whole thing tied together. However, they managed to do that with a bunch of short matches, which made me wonder where the

wrestling was, and why that's not the best way of thinking.

That's where the modern fan in me is coming out and shows you how different things are. Today you get the long matches and the big storyline developments in chunks. This is much more about moving things slowly and that works much better week to week, which is how this was supposed to go. It makes for a slower pace because things don't all happen at once, instead going week to week. You know, for a reason to come back. Now why can't today's Raw get that vibe?

They do it to an extent but the modern philosophy seems to be "air big match, air big match again, air same big match on pay per view". Back in the day, you would actually have to PAY to see the big matches in a rather novel concept. It's almost like the TV isn't the be all end all of stuff and fans wanted to see the bigger matches down the line. I'm sure there's no connection to wrestling's popularity and this concept.

It also doesn't help when you have commentary treating only a handful of things as important. How many times today do you see commentary either ignoring a match or basically calling half the wrestlers worthless or stupid? It feels like more than half the time, which makes so much stuff seem like a waste of time. When a lot of the matches are a waste of time, it makes for a weak show.

Overall though, this was a fun show with a lot of things happening but the show never feeling like it was dragging. There's no match where you look at your watch to see how much longer it could possibly go and nothing feels repetitive. Why is that so hard to get to today? The lack of a second hour helped, but things were on such a roll at this point that it didn't seem to matter.

Oh and then we had the Mae Young stuff. Today's Raw doesn't have that, therefore making it better almost by definition.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-n>

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2017 Awards: Tag Team/Group of the Year

Now this one isn't that hard. And no it's not the Young Bucks. This is for good teams, though they did block me on Twitter so maybe I should...never mind.

What's better than a great wrestler? Well not much, but something that's also good is having a bunch of wrestlers who come together and do well as a unit. That's the basic idea behind a stable and since there aren't enough of them to get their own category, we'll throw them together with tag teams, as usual.

Before we get started, I'm intentionally leaving off LIJ and Bullet Club. I know they're both big deals but I just don't watch enough New Japan to give a good opinion on them.

We'll start with a team that I never liked who have turned into a pretty solid combination. Back in late 2016, the Bar was put together and for the life of me I did not get why. I understood the point in putting them into a team but EGADS the build to get there was terrible. It turned out that they worked quite well together as two big Europeans who hit other

people really hard is a heck of a combination. Who would have guessed?

Down to NXT for a bit with the Undisputed Era. While the name is still bad (like the Bar), they've taken charge of NXT and have already won some gold there, which is a lot more important down there instead of how it would be on the main roster. The team hit the ground running and there's a good reason to believe they'll keep right on going. You can almost pencil in Adam Cole as winning the NXT Title in 2018 that's really not a bad thing.

As much as I can't stand their leader more often than not, the same could be said of Sanity. Killian Dain is a heck of a monster and I can watch Nikki Cross doing her crazy thing for days. The team also had some success and teased getting closer to the main event scene without actually getting there. This is pretty much the perfect fit for everyone involved and that's a very good sign for all of them, along with being a great stable at the same time.

One more in NXT, even though they split up pretty early in the year. DIY is one of the better in-ring teams NXT has ever had (and that's covering some serious ground. They came into the year as Tag Team Champions and then had some great matches over the next few months. Throw in one of the best heel splits in many, many years (if not ever, actually) and there's no way they weren't at least getting a mention.

Even though they didn't have the best year, you have to include New Day, if nothing else just for how long they've managed to survive. They should have been a nothing little act that died out in a few months and we're now on what? Their fourth year? They did host Wrestlemania this year and won some tag titles so there has to be something going on there. There's always the fun bit of just seeing what they're going to do to stay relevant, which they somehow keep managing to pull off. Now just get Kofi in the main event.

And that leaves one of the easiest picks of the year. I've been a big fan of the Usos since they debuted and MY GOODNESS they've turned it up lately. This Uso Penitentiary is getting to be one of the best things on WWE at the moment and they've dominated the tag division on Smackdown for months now. The only thing missing for them was leading the Smackdown Siege (they were MADE for that) and that's quite the resume for the year. The Usos win and it's really not close.

Smackdown – August 7, 2003: Obvious Isn't Bad

Smackdown

Date: August 7, 2003

Location: Skyreach Place, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

Smackdown has some work to do to catch up with Raw, which announced an Elimination Chamber match for the upcoming Summerslam. Tonight Smackdown has a big match of its own though with Brock Lesnar vs. Vince McMahon in a cage with Kurt Angle as guest referee. Why that's a big deal isn't clear, but note that we'll be having two McMahons in main events this week, meaning the ratings should be through the roof. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Kurt Angle giving Brock a rematch for the title but being cut off by Vince. For some reason Vince agreed to face Brock in a cage tonight. You really can feel the shenanigans coming here and in this case that works best. Just because you can see the ending doesn't mean it's a bad thing.

Opening sequence.

Chris Benoit vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title despite Benoit asking for the title to be on the line. Eddie picks the leg to start and they hit the mat for a technical sequence as you might have expected from these two. The Canadian fans are VERY pro-Benoit (well duh) but an Eddie chant pops up as well because Eddie is just on another level at this point.

Benoit backdrops his way out of a wristlock and Eddie bails to the ropes before Benoit can grab a hold of his own. Instead some insanely loud chops have Eddie begging for time out but he's still able to snapmare him down and take over again. A slingshot hilo and belly to back suplex give Eddie two and it's off to an armbar.

Back up and Benoit grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker (stealing both Eddie's move and gimmick), followed by a very hard powerbomb. Cue Rhyno to break up the Swan Dive but Benoit avoids the frog splash. A dive takes Rhyno down, only to have Tajiri come in and take Eddie down for the DQ.

Rating: C+. Even with the lame ending, Eddie vs. Benoit in any form is worth seeing. They didn't have very long here but they managed to get something out of it because they're that popular. Having the Canadian fans cheer for Eddie shows you what kind of a roll he's on at the moment and that's an incredibly positive sign for Guerrero. It's also a good sign that they were doing the technical stuff here, making the US Title feel more like the wrestlers' title. Almost no title has an identity and this one having such a thing and doing it well so far hopefully is a sign of things to come.

They keep brawling but Sgt. Slaughter of all people (like Stephanie would lower herself to this) says we're going to restart this as a tag match. Now I need to see Slaughter doing the Teddy Long dance.

Chris Benoit/Tajiri vs. Rhyno/Eddie Guerrero

Joined in progress with Benoit getting the Crossface on Rhyno and Eddie having to make a save. Eddie comes in legally with a hurricanrana but Tajiri makes a save this time around. A baseball slide dropkick takes Eddie's knee out and now Tajiri can come in legally. The handspring elbow drops Rhyno as they're working a very nice pace to start things off.

Tajiri goes after Eddie but gets run over by Rhyno. That just earns him a Tarantula but Eddie is there with a dropkick for his own save. Rhyno actually puts on a Sharpshooter, drawing Benoit in to protect Canada's honor. He's fine with Eddie's half crab though, suggesting that he's not much of a Lance Storm fan. Rhyno comes in for some forearms as Benoit's save attempt goes nowhere.

Instead it's Eddie getting backdropped to the floor and Tajiri makes the tag, albeit thanks to Rhyno knocking him into Benoit. With Benoit on the floor, Rhyno powerbombs Tajiri but gets misted (with the referee looking at them). Eddie didn't see the tag and frog splashes the illegal Tajiri, only to get caught in the Crossface for the tap.

Rating: B-. It was certainly a creative ending and odds are this sets up a big title match, perhaps with all four fighting at the same time. As mentioned earlier, this is the kind of wrestling that makes the show a lot more interesting and I'd really like to see it happen a lot more often. Benoit and Eddie are the wrestlers so it's a smart idea to throw in a striker like Tajiri and a power guy like Rhyno to really even things out.

Josh Matthews (looking as stupid as I've ever seen him with two necklaces and an earring) asks Kurt Angle about some rumors, but Kurt cuts him off. Kurt has been hearing rumors about Josh, scotch tape, two midgets and a picture of Justin Timberlake that still keeps him up nights. He's heard the rumors about Brock, who he still considers a friend. A big stupid friend at times, but still a friend. They're going to resolve their issues face to face though.

Zach Gowen vs. Nunzio

Matt Hardy, who puts ketchup on one fry at a time and is a better commentator than Michael Cole, is on commentary and brought Shannon Moore with him. Gowen takes him down to the mat to start but is easily powered into the corner. Nunzio grabs the leg and mocks his inability to sweep the other leg as Matt complains about having to share the stage with a sideshow freak. As cruel as he sounds, there's really nothing wrong about what he says.

A quick leglock is broken up and Nunzio sends him outside. Gowen gets turned inside out with a clothesline and we hit the chinlock. Matt: "Everybody knows that Matt Hardy's career has more legs underneath it than Zach Gowen's.". Back up and Nunzio crotches himself and a middle rope moonsault hits him in the ropes. A leg lariat and a middle rope Fameasser both get the same. Gowen grabs a neckbreaker but has to elbow Shannon down, allowing Nunzio to hit a top rope dropkick for the pin.

Rating: C-. That's on a bit of a sliding scale and that's the problem: you have to adjust everything for Gowen and the matches are only going to be so good. He has to have a select group of opponents and his offense is almost all based around that one leg. It's nothing special in the first place and when your entire character is based around your one trait, it's not like you have much of a shelf life. Gowen is incredible impressive, but this isn't going to work for very long.

Post match, Gowen takes another Twist of Fate.

Undertaker finds Sable sitting on Vince's laugh and asks her to leave. He's not happy with Vince sending A-Train after Stephanie so the little "oil hoochie" could get a win at Vengeance. If Undertaker was part of the family, he'd have already beaten the heck out of Vince. The boss is about to tell Undertaker what he can do with that opinion when Funaki comes running in to say Brock has been attacked. Angle and the FBI are near him and Vince gives Kurt a look without saying anything. You can feel the twist coming from here and it's still working just fine.

Undertaker vs. John Cena

Undertaker beat him at Vengeance in a match that hurt a lot of Cena's credibility. Cena's rap implies he wants to force sexual acts onto Undertaker. The big man wastes no time in sending him into the corner and the slow beating begins. He starts in on Cena's shoulder as the fans think Cena sucks. A hard clothesline looks to set up Old School but Cena pulls him down, somehow knowing what to expect.

Cena starts in on the knee, only to get his arm pulled down again. A lifting wristlock keeps Undertaker in trouble as they must have a long time here. Now Old School connects and the slow paced beating heads

outside. Totally one sided so far. Back in and Undertaker actually takes him all the way to the top for a superplex but Undertaker bangs up his own ribs.

Back from a break with Cena in control and pounding on the ribs. They had something here with Cena having such a basic offense but sticking with it because it was the most logical thing he had. Undertaker shrugs it off and posts Cena on the floor because he's had enough of being on defense for now. In a good example of everything wrong with commentary, Cole keeps mentioning the bad ribs and Tazz yells at him for saying it over and over. Heaven forbid he tell a story or something.

The Throwback gives Cena two but a big boot and elbow give Undertaker the same. Cena's spinebuster goes back to the ribs but Undertaker mounts him for some rights and lefts. The Last Ride is broken up and the ref is bumped. Now didn't we all know something like that was coming? The chokeslam gets no cover and it's A-Train coming in for a bicycle kick and a backbreaker. That's only good for two on Undertaker so he tries the Tombstone, only to get reversed into the FU for the pin.

Rating: D+. They really didn't need this much time, especially with the arm work going nowhere. Undertaker vs. A-Train isn't going to be much to see and this seemed to be more about setting that up than helping Cena. That being said, it helped a lot to have Cena get the win off his own move instead of A-Train's. Cena needed a win like this and you knew full well they weren't giving Cena a clean pin, either here or at the pay per view. The match wasn't very good because of the slow pace and the ending didn't really help things.

Jamie Noble vs. Doug Basham

Shaniqua gives Doug a spank for inspiration and the announcers laugh the whole thing off. Jamie, apparently a face for getting to sleep with Torrie and Nidia (ok they've got something there), kicks Doug away but gets caught with some crossface shots to the head. A Vader Bomb elbow gives Doug two as Tazz goes on and on about what Shaniqua does with the Bashams.

The move that would become known as Wasteland gives Doug two and we hit

the chinlock. Jamie fights up with a clothesline and dropkick for a near fall each. A top rope elbow looks to finish but Danny distracts the referee. Not that it matters as Jamie gets a small package for the pin.

Rating: D. Commentary made this one insufferable and I don't see it getting much better. I'm sure there was nothing better for WWE to do than spend years on the Bashams in OVW before bringing them up as unintentionally comedic sex characters. On top of that they're apparently feuding with a team that got together over group sex. Oh and the boss is having an affair with his mistress. You really shouldn't need so much of the same theme on one show.

Post match the beatdown is on until Billy Gunn makes the save.

Angle denies attacking Lesnar. I'd believe him.

Next week, Haas and Benjamin defend against Mysterio and Kidman. That would be another week where the Cruiserweight Title isn't so much as mentioned.

Rey Mysterio vs. Charlie Haas

Non-title of course. Haas takes him down without much effort to start and takes Rey's head off with a hard clothesline. A hard whip into the corner starts working on Rey's back and it's off to something like a torture rack with Tazz referencing the luchador Atlantis of all people. Back up and Charlie misses a charge, allowing Rey to hit a springboard flipping seated senton for two, followed by a springboard spinning crossbody (with Haas having to run over to catch him). The 619 connects but a hurricanrana is countered into the Haas of Pain for the tap.

Rating: C. Charlie got to show off here and a clean win over Mysterio is quite the accomplishment. It's a very good sign that both he and Benjamin can have solid singles matches and more proof of how great an amateur background is. Even if nothing else is working, just taking them down to the mat is a good way to get through parts of a match. Mysterio as a tag guy is fine, but get the title off of him already. The problem though is finding someone to put it on as the division basically doesn't exist. On a related note, what the heck happened to Ultimo Dragon? He was around

all of two weeks and then vanished.

The cage is lowered.

We recap Brock's injury.

Angle leaves Vince's office.

Brock Lesnar vs. Vince McMahon

In a cage with Angle as guest referee. Brock looks banged up but is easily able to shove Vince down twice in a row. The F5 is loaded up but Brock collapses. Angle won't count the cover so Vince slaps him, earning himself an ankle lock. Brock of course nips up and F5's Angle for the pretty obvious (not a bad thing) heel turn. No rating as the match doesn't really end and wasn't exactly a match in the first place.

A long, long beatdown ends the show. This is definitely the right move as Brock wasn't working as the good guy and Lesnar vs. Angle II with Lesnar as the heel could be a lot more interesting. One last note: Brock and Vince pose with the camera panning from Vince's face to Brock's, who looks completely maniacal with his eyes bugging out for a really creepy visual.

Overall Rating: C+. There's some very solid wrestling on here (see the first half hour) and Brock turning heel is a good move as Brock just wasn't working in the role. Him working as Vince's heavy is a far better use for his talents and gives him some new people to work against. At the same time though, anything below the midcard is basically death at the moment with stuff like Noble and Gunn being goofy wastes of time and Gowen still riding on momentum even though the foot was taken off the gas a long time ago. Get some better stuff on the bottom part of the card and Smackdown could be awesome all over again.

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Ring of Honor TV – January 4, 2018: British Scoundrels

Ring of Honor

Date: January 3, 2018

Host: Ian Riccaboni

It's another Best Of show as we're STILL waiting on the fallout from Final Battle. In theory this is the last show before we move forward but that doesn't exactly do much good for the fans who are waiting around. That being said, a highlight show can do a lot of good so hopefully this lives up to expectations. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Ian welcomes us to the show and says tonight is going to be all about the War of the Worlds UK Tour.

From August 18 in London.

TV Title: Titan vs. Kushida

Kushida is defending. Technical sequence to start and it's an early standoff with the fans being impressed. Then again it's a Ring of Honor crowd so they would probably cheer if they were bored out of their mind. Titan springboards into an armdrag to the floor, followed by a running hurricanrana on the outside.

Back in and Titan teases a hand walk headscissors but Kushida throws him at the referee for a kick to the ribs. They're quickly back on the floor with Kushida putting him in a chair for a running dropkick. Kushida starts in on the arm to soften it up for the Hoverboard Lock. A basement dropkick mixes things up a bit but the actual holds sends Titan bailing to the ropes. Back up and something like a Pele cuts Titan down but he's still able to hurricanrana the champ to the floor. A big old Lionsault puts Kushida down (and sees Titan landing on the barricade) as we take a break.

Back with Titan grabbing something like a Figure Four but a rope is grabbed in pretty short order. Titan gets caught on top but Kushida pulls him down into a cross armbreaker. That's rolled into the ropes again but Titan handsprings right back into the hold. Titan rolls out of that as well and la majistral gets two.

Another wacky rollup gets the same and that draws the FIGHT FOREVER chant. A springboard hurricanrana takes Kushida down but he's right back up with the Hoverboard Lock. Titan gets a bit too close to the ropes so Kushida rolls away and tries Back to the Future. That's countered as well (geez) and Titan kicks him in the head. A Downward Spiral into the buckle sets up Back to the Future to retain the title at 15:49 shown.

Rating: B+. Wow. When this match started, I was expecting just another pretty good TV match that didn't really offer anything special. What I got was one of the best Ring of Honor matches I've seen in a VERY long time as both guys left it all in the ring and came out looking like stars. Kushida is my favorite New Japan guy and this is a great example of why. I've always really liked his matches and this is one of the better ones I've seen from him. Definitely check this out.

From August 19 in Liverpool.

Jay Lethal vs. Josh Bodom

Bodom's British Cruiserweight Title isn't on the line. I've seen Bodom's work before and wasn't that impressed but maybe a better opponent will help. They exchange wristlock counters to start until Lethal blocks a hiptoss and grabs a swinging neckbreaker. A springboard dropkick puts

Bodom on the floor but he comes back in with a hurricanrana. There's a dropkick to really stagger Lethal, though not enough that he can't hit his cartwheel into a dropkick of his own.

A missile dropkick misses and Bodom knees him in the head. Bodom grabs a reverse hurricanrana to put him outside, followed by a middle rope moonsault. Back in and a top rope double stomp to the back of Jay's head, followed by a standing shooting star, gives Josh a near fall. The Lethal Combination gets Jay out of trouble and Hail to the King gets two. We hit the Figure Four but cue Silas Young for a distraction. Not that it matters as the Lethal Injection is good enough to pin Bodom at 9:18.

Rating: C-. Ok so maybe it is Bodom. This did nothing for me, again, and that's not a positive sign when we're only on the third match. Lethal shrugged off the distraction and won anyway, making me think that Lethal vs. Young was the right move here. You know, a match between two people with a story and who happen to actually WORK FOR RING OF HONOR. There were some moments here but it didn't work, again.

Once again from August 18 in London.

Bullet Club vs. Los Ingobernables de Japon

Cody/Young Bucks/Hangman Page/Marty Scurll

Tetsuya Naito/Bushi/Evil/Sanada/Hiromu Takahashi

Marty and Takahashi start things off with Hiromu stealing the umbrella. That scoundrel! Does he not know who the villain is around here? The tease of a lick to the umbrella is just too far for Scurll and the fight is on with a technical sequence into the bird pose. A running hurricanrana allows Takahashi to do his own bird pose but he has to flip out of a chickenwing attempt.

Cody and Sanada come in with the fans singing about Cody, including his last name as a copyright infringement. Maybe that earns another Cease and Desist letter? Sanada dropkicks him into the corner and the singing continues. We get the big ten man showdown but there's no violence. Instead the fans want some superkicks so it's Page coming in and teasing

one. Naito comes in as well and we take a break.

Back with Naito avoiding a lockup and handing it off to Evil. Page is sent outside and it's Naito spinning into his signature pose to a BIG reaction. Scurll jumps him from behind but Los Ingobernables clear the ring without much effort. A quick spank from Evil keeps Scurll in trouble (Appropriate?) and it's off to Bushi for a middle rope dropkick. Marty gets in a Backstabber and the hot tag brings in both Bucks (sure why not) for the house cleaning to go with the big reactions from the crowd.

Everything breaks down and the Club does the five man Rise of the Terminators, setting up four straight dives. Marty gives Bushi a reverse Razor's Edge into something like a One Winged Angel, followed by a top rope splash to give Matt two. Back from another break with Page and Nick missing moonsaults. Matt misses as well so Nick and Cody stomp away. The Club wants Marty to try a moonsault and panic sets in very quickly. He finally gets up (shaking the entire way) and....I think misses? His hands grazed Bushi but he sold it like a miss.

The hot tag brings in Sanada to tie Page up, followed by the running dropkick to the back. Everything breaks down again and Page hits Naito with the rolling lariat. Sanada comes back in with Cross Rhodes for Cody, only to have Scurll break his fingers. The Superkick Party is on and the Bucks grab Takahashi's stuffed cat Daryl. Takahashi has to save Daryl from the chickenwing but he winds up taking the Meltzer Driver.

The Club poses and Takahashi starts crying. Fans: "SAY YOU'RE SORRY!" Takahashi fights all of them because his partners are out looking for hot dogs and beet juice. A quintuple superkick drops Takahashi but Naito comes back in. Bushi offers some mist and Naito rolls up the very green Page for two. Destino plants Page for the pin at 22:09 shown.

Rating: B. That's a great way to do a major house show main event and that's the right idea. The fans need something entertaining to make the shows feel more important and having two big groups like this in one match is the right way to go. They had some good stuff going on here, but some of the screwy comedy stuff wasn't exactly my taste. I can see why this is considered one of the best things the company had though as it

was some good fun, especially for the fans there live.

Ian wraps it up and we get some credits to end the show in a nice touch.

Overall Rating: B+. In a way, I like this better than just going with the standard Best Of formula. There's way too much to cover in the course of a year in just an hour long show so focusing on a single tour might have been the way to go. Two really solid matches and...well they had two really solid matches and that's more than you get more often than not. Fun show here, but I'm really looking forward to getting back to the regular stuff.

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Main Event – January 4, 2018: Why I Watch Wrestling (Seriously)

Main Event

Date: January 4, 2018

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's a new year and...that's not likely to change a single thing around here. Main Event is the definition of a single formula show and really, that's the best thing it can be. The show gives some people a chance to get in the ring which they won't be getting on Raw, mainly because we need some more cruiserweight matches that advance nothing because Enzo Amore doesn't defend the title anymore. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Mickie James vs. Dana Brooke

It's nice to change up from the cruiserweights every now and then. Feeling out process to start until Dana takes her head off with a clothesline. The handspring elbow in the corner gets two and we're off to the chinlock because that's what you do in wrestling. Back up and Mickie grabs a hurricanrana out of the corner but the MickDT is broken up. Mickie chokes her over the ropes with her legs (similar to a Tarantula) but Dana grabs a rollup for the completely clean pin at 4:36.

Rating: D. What the heck was that? I know Mickie is mainly there to put people over but DANA? I've been quite a fan of her new look with Titus Worldwide and I'm one of the only people on the planet who is still a fan of hers in general but why in the world is she winning here? I mean, if you have to give her a win like this it makes sense here, though that still doesn't mean it makes sense.

Quick look at Asuka beating Alexa Bliss on Raw.

Quick look at Becky Lynch returning on Smackdown.

We look back at Sami Zayn costing AJ Styles a match against Kevin Owens last week.

From Smackdown.

AJ Styles vs. Sami Zayn

Non-title. Shane, Owens and Bryan are at ringside. Sami takes AJ down

early to start and gets two off a backdrop. A dropkick gets two more and we take an early break. Back with Sami holding a chinlock to keep AJ grounded. AJ fights back up, only to get his throat snapped across the top rope. Sami gets caught on top but punches his way to freedom, followed by the Blue Thunder Bomb for the same near fall that the move always gets.

Styles is right back up and grabs the Calf Crusher, only to have Sami make it to the ropes in fairly long order. The Phenomenal Forearm doesn't work but the referee gets knocked to the floor. As expected, AJ grabs a rollup for two as the referee dives in after being held up by Owens. Shane shoves Kevin down and Owens is ejected, followed by Bryan saying Shane should go with him. The distraction lets Sami hit the Helluva Kick for the pin at 13:44.

Rating: C+. I don't think the ending was any kind of a surprise and that's all well and good. What worries me is the battle of the bosses, as I could easily see this turning into some kind of a mess where the wrestlers are overshadowed for the sake of a story that a lot of people aren't interested in seeing. The wrestlers are talented so just let them do their thing. We don't need to see Shane get this kind of focus and it's been going on for MONTHS now.

Post match AJ tells Owens and Zayn to stop acting like children. He's tired of everyone else getting involved so let's just make it a handicap match for the title at the Rumble. A smiling Bryan makes the match to end the show.

We look back at Samoa Joe injuring Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns getting disqualified in his quest for revenge.

From Raw.

Intercontinental Title: Samoa Joe vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending and loses the title if he's disqualified. Joe pops him with the right hands to start but Reigns comes back with some forearms to the back. The referee breaks up some shots to the face in the corner because the rules say he needs to be all serious here when no

referee would ever do something like this otherwise. A suplex puts Reigns on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Joe running him over with an elbow for two. Reigns grabs a suplex though, only to miss a charge and go shoulder first into the post. Joe works on the arm but Roman is back up with a clothesline. That just earns him a charge to take him down again as the pace stays slow (in a good way). A hard whip sends Reigns into the corner and Joe takes him down to the mat to crank on the arm some more.

Reigns fights up again and hits a running clothesline, followed by the standing clotheslines in the corner. The running apron dropkick gives Reigns two but hang on a second as the referee has to warn for a DQ. Joe sends him outside though and there's the suicide elbow for a double knockdown.

They're both back in at nine and we take a second break. Back again with Reigns getting headbutted down but yelling at Joe to hit him harder. Reigns gets two off a Samoan drop and Joe bails to the floor. Roman dives into a shot to the chest and gets sent into the steps but thankfully Joe rolls back inside to break the count. A whip into the steps is reversed but of course that's not enough for the DQ.

Joe gets in a shot to the face, only to eat a Superman punch off the steps. Back in and another Superman punch gets two with the kickout stunning Reigns. The spear is blocked and Joe sends Reigns into the referee, who of course is talked out of the DQ. Another Superman punch is countered into the spinning Rock Bottom for two more and now Joe is yelling at the referee. The Clutch goes on but Reigns spins out of it and hits the spear to retain at 24:53.

Rating: B+. The DQ stuff was kind of annoying but they were beating the heck out of each other for a LONG time here and it made for a good match. I mean, you knew the most likely ending was spear into Reigns winning but at least Joe got in a very solid match before losing via clean pin. It's going to be almost all Reigns until we get to the Superdome because THIS TIME FOR SURE but that's how WWE works anymore.

Akira Tozawa vs. Tony Nese

Ok so maybe it's nice to have the tag teams gone for a week. Hang on a second though as Nese needs to pose. Tozawa isn't in the mood to wait and starts in with the kicks, followed by the fake out right hand. Nese is back up and stomping away in the corner as this is heavy on the striking so far. Tozawa knocks him outside but the suicide dive is blocked (just like it would be on 205 Live this week).

Back from a break with Nese grabbing a waistlock to keep Tozawa down. A double kick to the face puts both guys down, suggesting that Tozawa is a much harder kicker than Nese. Now the suicide dive connects for two and it's time to strike it out again. Tozawa knocks the heck out of Nese and the top rope backsplash is good for the pin at 10:12.

Rating: C+. For a match that should have been just a quick time filler, they were actually working out there and that's always cool to see. Tozawa is still one of the better options in the division and Nese is a heck of a heel, even if his in-ring stuff might not be the best in the world. This was certainly better than waiting around on Enzo but that's what we're stuck with for the time being.

We'll wrap it up here.

Here are Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman to close things out. Paul thinks the company's New Year's Resolution is to stack the deck against Lesnar by throwing multiple challengers at the same time. It used to be challenger and now it's CHALLENGERS because there's no other way to stop Brock. That makes things more complicated because Brock can lose the title without getting pinned, which is the only way it could happen.

Heyman mocks the announcers talking about the odds but says Brock is always 100%. If it's one on one, no one is beating Brock. You could even throw all thirty Royal Rumble entrants against him and it would be the same slaughter. They go to leave but here's Kane (with Brock pausing due to a delay in Kane's music hitting) to chokeslam Brock but Lesnar sits up like Undertaker. A Cactus Clothesline puts them on the floor but some of the locker room comes out for the break up. No Braun as Brock poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. You know, as odd as it sounds, the original content

here is a good example of why I keep watching wrestling. There are two nothing matches here and we had a pair of surprises. The cruiserweights worked hard and had a fun match while the women gave us a bit of a surprise with an unexpected finish. That's the fun part about wrestling: just when you think you know what you're going to see, it throws you the occasional curve ball. I'm not saying it was great or even very good, but it surprised me and that's a good feeling.

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2017 Awards: Angle of the Year

I'm not even bothering to make the Kurt joke this year.

This is one of the biggest awards of the year because angles are what matters more than almost anything else. You can have a heck of a match but it doesn't mean very much without a reason to care about these people. There were some great ones over the course of the year and you might have forgotten a few of them so here we are again.

We'll start with the build to one of the biggest matches of the year. A three way feud is one of the hardest things to pull off in wrestling but NXT managed to do it (I'm as shocked as you are). This time around they set up Sanity vs. the Undisputed Era vs. Roderick Strong/Authors of Pain in FREAKING WARGAMES. That's more than enough to make this a big deal and it was awesome as a bonus.

From the same show, we have a match that I completely underrated when it aired in the first place. In the build towards Takeover: WarGames, Velveteen Dream may have wanted to sleep with Aleister Black (it's not clear) but the whole idea came down to Black not saying Dream's name. The match wound up being awesome and we even got a payoff with Black saying his name after kicking Dream's head off. Great build, great match, great payoff.

I know it was short term but Chris Jericho vs. Kenny Omega had a heck of a build to a match that wasn't taking place in 2017. This felt like an old school blood feud between two guys who just don't like each other. Jericho kept attacking Omega and now I want to see them fight. I mean, I've seen it by now but at least the build was awesome in a way you don't get very much anymore.

If you've read my stuff over the last few years, you know I'm a big fan of Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens. That alone should tell you I was excited to see them getting a bigger push, which is exactly what we got when Sami saved Kevin from Shane McMahon's latest Cell dive. This set them up as some awesome heels over on Smackdown and I'm interested to see where this goes from here, which is the best thing that can happen.

This is less of an angle and more of just the build to a match but John Cena vs. Roman Reigns became must see television for a good while there. It was in the same vein as Rock vs. Cena from years back with two guys trading bombs against each other, albeit with only one actually managing to make that

much contact. Cena mauled Reigns on the mic and the win did help Reigns, but my goodness this was one sided up until the bell rang. Incredibly entertaining, but destruction otherwise.

That leaves us with one more option and it's gone throughout the entire year. Johnny Gargano started the year as one half of the NXT Tag Team Champions but the Authors of Pain took care of that back in January. Then Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa lost the rematch at Takeover: Chicago, which resulted in the team splitting. It was all downhill for Gargano from there, even to the point of him losing matches just because he saw a DIY t-shirt. He kept fighting though and eventually won a #1 contenders competition to end the year. It was a year long story and it never once got boring, which made it the story of the year.

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1995: When Shawn Isn't Enough

Royal Rumble 1995

Date: January 22, 1995

Location: USF Sun Dome, Tampa, Florida

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Oh dang it 1995 WWF still exists. This is that year that no one likes to talk about and you have to fly through it as fast as you can or you might risk seeing something on it. The big twist this year is that the intervals in the Rumble are only 60 seconds, so the whole match is like 40 minutes long. The other problem is that Diesel is WWF Champion here. The good news is that he's facing Bret Hart, one of the two men capable of dragging an awesome match out of him. Let's get to it.

We open with the big deal about tonight's show: Pamela Anderson arrives. She'll be escorting the winner of the Rumble to the ring at Wrestlemania. A bunch of guys arrive to greet her.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Razor Ramon

Jarrett is challenging and now has the Roadie with him. Razor starts with his usual assortment of punches and a fallaway slam to send Jeff to the floor. After a little toweling off on the floor, Jeff armdrags Razor down and struts. They trade arm holds until Razor gets taken to the mat where Jeff messes with his hair. Careful with the grease there Jeff. Razor gets annoyed and knocks Jeff to the floor for some more Memphis stalling.

Jeff gets back in and immediately puts in an armbar where Razor can mess with Jarrett's hair. Some dropkicks floor the champ and a clothesline gets two. Razor catches a boot coming and ducks the enziguri from Jeff, but Razor misses an elbow to keep Jarrett in control. We hit the chinlock followed by a sunset flip by Jeff for two. Another dropkick gets the same and Jarrett is getting frustrated.

Jarrett hooks a sleeper but Razor quickly counters. The counter doesn't last long though as Jeff hits a swinging neckbreaker for two. Ramon slides behind Jeff in the corner and crotches him on the post to a big pop. We get a messed up (not botched mind you) spot where Razor was going to try a bulldog off the middle rope but Jeff turns around and it had to be a clothesline. Eh no harm no foul. Jeff backdrops Razor to the floor, injuring the champ's knee. Roadie clips him in the knee and Razor gets counted out.

We won't get to the rating just yet. Post match Jeff calls Razor a coward for taking the easy way out like that and calls him back into the ring. Razor pulls a Marty McFly and takes the bait, giving us another match.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Razor Ramon

Razor tries some quick rollups for two but Jeff goes right for the knee to take over. Jeff does his best Ric Flair imitation but as he goes for the third cannonball down onto the leg, Razor kicks him over the top and out to the floor. Back in and Jarrett puts on the Figure Four, putting

Razor in a lot of trouble. Razor escapes and starts his comeback with punches and the belly to back superplex but Jeff counters in mid air for two. Razor clotheslines him down and loads up the Edge, but the knee gives out and Jeff rolls him up for the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. I always remember liking this match and it holds up pretty well. Memphis stalling isn't for everyone but it's a good way of drawing heel heat, which Jeff might as well have been an iceberg for otherwise. Razor was awesome at this point and had good chemistry with Jeff, so this worked pretty well all around. The ending was smart as it was Razor's trademark ending for house shows, but he would usually win in about 30 seconds with the Razor's Edge. Nice to see them switch things up here.

Pamela Anderson has been given a lot of gifts from various wrestlers. One of the running gags on this show is that Pamela clearly doesn't want to be here at all and has these "GET ME OUT OF HERE" looks on her face the whole night. Todd Pettingill tries to hit on her and completely fails of course.

Jeff says it's time to celebrate.

IRS vs. The Undertaker

This is the start of the Undertaker vs. Million Dollar Team feud which went on FOREVER. The bell rings and we stand around a lot. IRS tries to jump Taker from behind and it goes nowhere. Taker glares him down to the floor and the stalling continues. IRS slides in, gets glared down, and hides on the floor again. Finally we head back in with IRS pounding away and getting kicked in the face for his efforts.

Taker grabs him by the tie and swings him out of the corner, followed by Old School as this is dominance so far. IRS and DiBiase get in an argument on the floor, causing DiBiase to call for some druids. Taker loads up Old School again but the druid shakes the rope and Taker goes down. A clothesline puts Taker on the floor where he beats on the druids a bit before IRS jumps him from behind.

The druids send Taker into the steps and there's an abdominal stretch by IRS. That goes nowhere so Taker misses an elbow to really slow himself

down. IRS hits some basic stuff as the crowd is almost completely silent. Druid interference gets two for IRS and also allows him to escape the Tombstone. A clothesline puts Taker down but he pops up and hits a chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D. At the end of the day, this was about thirteen minutes of Taker beating up IRS. I mean....did ANYONE buy IRS as a threat to the Dead Man here? That was the problem with the eight month long feud between Taker and DiBiase's group: no one on the team was a real threat to him at all. Bad match here but that had to be expected.

Post match Taker beats up the druids and has a staredown with King Kong Bundy. During the staring, IRS steals the Urn. There's the launch of the feud and Bundy beats up Taker for awhile.

Diesel doesn't have much to say about his match with Bret.

Bret is ready for his chance at the title.

WWF World Title: Diesel vs. Bret Hart

Diesel is defending in case you're really slow. Bret tries to brawl to start but is almost immediately knocked down by a big shot to the face. A clothesline puts Bret on the floor where he chills for a bit. Back in and Bret goes after the knee like a smart Hitman. He puts on a quick Figure Four and after a good deal of time in it, Diesel gets to the rope. Bret does something you hardly ever see enough: he puts the same hold back on. Why don't more people do that? He had Diesel in trouble, so why mess with what was working?

Diesel makes the rope again and heads to the floor where Bret hits a suicide dive to have the champ reeling. Diesel shrugs it off and sends Hart into the steps to get a breather. With Bret in the ropes, Diesel hits the running crotch attack to his back. There's a backbreaker to Bret and Diesel bends him across the knee a bit. Bret fires off some right hands but gets whipped hard into the buckle to stop him cold.

The champ loads up the Jackknife but instead puts Bret on his shoulder for a backbreaker. Why he doesn't JACKKNIFE HIM WHEN HE HAS THE CHANCE is

beyond my intelligence as Bret escapes. A big boot (Diesel's leg seems fine) puts Bret down for two, but Bret gets a boot up of his own, followed by a middle rope clothesline for two. Hart goes up and Diesel tries to slam him off, but the knee goes out, giving Bret a two count.

The knockout sends Bret to the floor and he pulls Diesel's legs out for the figure four around the post. Actually scratch that as he ties Diesel's legs together instead and pounds away. The Five Moves of Doom get two but Diesel grabs a rope to block the Sharpshooter. Bret clotheslines him to the floor but a dive is caught in mid-air. The tall guy rams him into the post and hits the Jackknife in the ring, but Shawn Michaels runs in to break up the count.

Shawn beats on Diesel's leg which isn't a DQ for no apparent reason. Shawn and Diesel had split up at Survivor Series if you're wondering why this beating is happening. We get a ruling that the match must continue to the delight (yes I said delight) of the crowd. Bret goes back to the knee, hooking another Figure Four. Diesel can't get to the ropes so he hits Bret in the bad ribs to escape. Ah selling, how I love you.

Diesel is all ticked off now and pounds away on Bret in the corner. A gutwrench suplex of all things gets two for the champ but a big boot in the corner misses. Bret wraps Diesel's leg around the post and blasts it with a chair. There's the Sharpshooter but now it's Owen coming in for the save and a beatdown on Bret. I would say there's a great tag match in there, but Bret and Shawn teaming up would mean the end of the world as we know it.

The match is going to continue AGAIN though and Diesel gets two on Bret. The place is starting to lose its minds over these near falls. Bret sends him into the buckle that Owen exposed and pounds away as Diesel is rocking again. Diesel comes back AGAIN with elbows and forearms to the face before punching Bret into the ropes where Hart's legs are caught. Bret is holding his knee but you never know with him.

Yep, he stands up and lays back down in some classic Hart goldbricking. Diesel goes for the Jackknife but Bret fakes him into a small package for two. Bret tries an O'Connor Roll and the referee is bumped. Backlund,

Michaels, Roadie and Jarrett run in and that's FINALLY enough for the double DQ.

Rating: A. These two had MAD chemistry together and this was no exception. They knew how to work the David vs. Goliath (I'm not sure how fair it is to call Bret David actually) formula to perfection and the matches were great as a result. Why the company kept going with Diesel vs. power guys is beyond me, because his best stuff comes against small guys like Bret and Shawn and always has.

Backlund stays in the ring and puts the Crossface Chicken Wing on Bret. This set up their I Quit match at Mania which even Bret admits sucked. Diesel makes the save and hugs Bret.

More Pettingill and Anderson stuff.

Bob Holly and 1-2-3 Kid are excited to be in the finals of the tag team title tournament.

Tag Titles: Bob Holly/1-2-3 Kid vs. Bam Bam Bigelow/Tatanka

Shawn and Diesel split up and we needed champions. Holly and Tatanka start things off with Tatanka hitting a side slam for two. Holly comes back with a slam and a few dropkicks as this is going nowhere so far. Off to the Kid vs. Bigelow, with the big man running over both of the smaller guys with ease. Bigelow LAUNCHES Kid into the air but gets caught in a rana to send Bam Bam rolling.

Back to Tatanka who whips Kid into the buckles a few times before it's off to Bigelow to pound on the small guy some more. In something that actually impressed me, Kid backdrops Bigelow to the floor. Both small guys try top rope cross bodies but they escape and dropkick the heels together. Things settle down with Tatanka beating on Holly for a LONG time. Bigelow comes in, allowing Tatanka to distract the Kid. Holly goes to the corner to find no partner and Bigelow splashes Bob.

Holly gets beaten down so badly that he goes to the wrong corner and tags in Tatanka. Thank goodness this isn't the Attitude Era because it probably would have been legal in some of their matches. Tatanka comes in

for more beating on Holly until Bob FINALLY gets in a clothesline for the hot tag to the Kid. Everything breaks down and Kid is LAUNCHED to the floor by Bigelow. Bam Bam loads up the moonsault but Tatanka accidentally hits the ropes to knock him to the mat. Somehow that's enough for the pin and the titles for the Kid.

Rating: C+. This went nearly sixteen minutes which was just too long. It's quite good but it would have been great if they cut off five minutes or so. Those launches by Bigelow were awesome looking as Kid continues to be an excellent seller of moves like those. The idea was that it was all Bigelow's fault, even though Tatanka is totally to blame for Bigelow crashing like that. The Gunns would win the titles back the next night on Raw, making this whole thing pretty pointless.

Post match DiBiase and Tatanka leave Bigelow in the ring, where Lawrence Taylor, NFL legend, laughs at him. Bigelow shoves him down, and there's Wrestlemania people.

We get a recap of the 94 Rumble, focusing on Diesel's dominance and Shawn helping to eliminate him.

Shawn laughs a bit.

We look at the ending to the match from last year.

Luger says he wants the title. Lex, it's been over for you for like eight months now. Let it go dude.

Vince apologizes to Lawrence Taylor.

Here's Pamela Anderson to watch the Rumble at ringside and MAN does she look miserable.

Royal Rumble

Shawn is #1 and Bulldog is #2. Shawn immediately jumps Bulldog but this isn't going to last long. Remember there are one minute intervals, which was just a bad idea in general. Smith gets a quick gorilla press, but why throw Shawn OUT when you can just slam him? That clearly won't come back to haunt him later or anything of course. Smith charges into a boot and

here's Eli Blu (one of the Harris Brothers, who were the big bald bikers who were around for WAY too long) at #3.

Nothing happens so here's Duke Droese (a wrestling garbageman) at #4. Eli fights Smith and Droese squeezes Shawn until Jimmy Del Ray of the Heavenly Bodies is #5. Nothing continues to happen because there isn't enough time between entries. Sione (Barbarian) of the Headshrinkers is #6 as Del Ray is tossed out. Tom Prichard of the Heavynly Bodies is #7 and STILL nothing is happening.

Doink is #8 as the Rumble is going way too fast. It's like the original Rumble: not enough names to care about and nothing going on at the same time. Kwang is #9 and Rick Martel is #10, I believe in his last WWF match. There are nine people in the ring right now. Shawn is almost out but fights off Kwang to survive. Owen Hart is in at #11 and here's Bret to jump him in the aisle. Owen survives and climbs in, only to be eliminated in three seconds.

Shawn puts out Droese and Timothy Well (partners with Steven Dunn in the tag team of Well Dunn) is #12 and is out almost immediately. Martel and Prichard go out faster than I can see them and Kwang superkicks Doink out. Luke of the Bushwhackers is #13 and during his entrance, everyone but Bulldog and Shawn are gone. Literally, four people were put out inside of six seconds. Luke is out almost immediately and it's Shawn vs. Bulldog again.

Here's Jacob Blu at #14 and HE T00 is gone in like fifteen seconds. This is so stupid. King Kong Bundy is #15 and he beats on both guys for about twenty seconds before it's Mo at #16. Mo is like the fifth guy to last less than thirty seconds. If your roster is this weak, CUT THE FREAKING MATCH DOWN. Nothing else happens until Mable is #17 for the showdown with Bundy. Mabel dumps him out as Butch is #18 and is gone in less than 20 seconds as well. More on this later.

Lex Luger is #19 and he goes right for Mabel for no apparent reason. He eliminates the fat purple and gold dude before gorilla pressing Michaels down like an idiot. Mantaur, a stupid monster character, is #20. He beats on Luger and Bulldog until Aldo Montoya (Justin Credible with a jockstrap

on his face) is #21. Henry Godwinn is #22 as we're waiting on a bunch of people to get thrown out so everyone can go home. I think this is one of Henry's first matches.

Billy Gunn is #23 so naturally Bart Gunn is #24. Bob Backlund is #25 and also lasts about fifteen seconds due to a Bret Hart attack. Steven Dunn is #26 as there are like ten people in there. Bret and Backlund fight in the aisle again and old man Dick Murdoch is #27. Mantaur misses a charge at Bart and Adam Bomb is #28. For the second year in a row, Vince decides Adam Bomb is going to win the Rumble. Seriously.

Fatu is #29 and Luger eliminates Mantaur. Crush is #30, giving us a final group of Shawn, Bulldog, Luger, Montoya, Godwinn, Bart, Billy, Dunn, Murdoch, Bomb, Fatu and Crush, or WAY TOO MANY PEOPLE. Thankfully Crush immediately eliminates the Gunns to clear the ring out a bit. We cut to Anderson who gives a very uninterested wave and points to the ring. You know, because this is SO beneath her. Well, not beneath her enough to give the check back or anything but you get the idea.

Dunn is put out off camera and Murdoch almost puts Shawn out. Luger makes the save due to a lack of intelligence as Murdoch tries headbutts on Fatu. Naturally it doesn't work at all because YOU DON'T HEADBUTT A SAMOAN. Bomb is backdropped out and Shawn throwsn Montoya out. Luger saves Shawn AGAIN and Crush eliminates Fatu. There are six guys left: Murdoch (who hits a dropkick and airplane spin on Godwinn), Godwinn, Shawn, Bulldog, Crush and Luger.

Murdoch gets dizzy from the spin and falls out to get us down to five. Lex dumps Godwinn and we've got four left. Michaels and Crush double team Luger as Bulldog gets a breather. They dump Lex and we've got three guys left. Smith gets double teamed until Shawn turns on Crush and is lifted into the air. Bulldog uses the distraction to eliminate Crush and it's one on one. Davey destroys Shawn and presses him onto (not over. That would make sense) the top rope. Shawn is knocked over the top, but in the famous finish, he hangs on and ONLY ONE FOOT touches, allowing Shawn to come back in and eliminate Smith to win.

Rating: D. This is a hard one to grade, because the stuff that was decent

was in fact decent. The problem is there wasn't much stuff that falls into that category. First and foremost, SEVEN PEOPLE OUT OF THIRTY did not last thirty seconds. If they're that meaningless to the match, simply do not put them in the Rumble. It looks stupid and there's no reason to have them out there.

Second, the time intervals. These were a major issues because there's no time to get ANYTHING going in the match. When you count ten seconds or so to get into the ring (some people take up to twenty), you're looking at about 45 seconds of action with the new guy before someone else comes out. That's just not enough time to get anything going at all.

Third, and this is probably the biggest problem of the match, look at the roster here. At a glance, I see four people with actual chances to win: Crush, Luger (they're both BIG stretches), Bulldog, and Shawn. After that there's Owen Hart but he was one of the guys that didn't make it thirty seconds in the ring.

Then you're looking at guys like Montoya and Well Dunn and the Bushwhackers (who amazingly still had jobs in 1995) and the Heavenly Bodies (by my count there were five tag teams in here, or one third of the match. WAY too many guys at that level) and Dick freaking Murdoch. This is a match that was BEGGING for a midcard to come in and fill in some spots. Guys like Ramon and Jarrett and Bigelow and Tatanka would have helped this match a ton, but instead we get all these fillers. That's a big reason why this didn't work.

Anderson poses with Shawn to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade because as good as the world title match is, the Rumble sucks it right back down. IRS vs. Taker isn't anything good but it's much more boring than bad. The opener and tag matches are good so I can't complain much there. 1995 would be AWFUL for the most part though, mainly due to all of the problems you could see coming in the Rumble. Still though, not an awful show by any stretch and it has a great world title match.

Ratings Comparison

Jeff Jarrett vs. Razor Ramon

Original: B+

Redo: C+

Undertaker vs. IRS

Original: D

Redo: D

Bret Hart vs. Diesel

Original: B-

Redo: A

Bob Holly/1-2-3 Kid vs. Bam Bam Bigelow/Tatanka

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: C+

What in the world was I thinking on the title match? It was great.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/14/royal-rumble-count-up-1995/>

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1994: Double Vision

Royal Rumble 1994

Date: January 22, 1994

Location: Providence Civic Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Ted DiBiase

This is one of those shows where the good stuff is good but the bad stuff is REALLY bad. The main idea here is that someone has to stop Yokozuna, and it's going to be one of three people: Bret Hart or Lex Luger who could get the shot by winning the Rumble, or the Undertaker who has a casket match against Yoko tonight for the title. Oh....this is going to be a long night. Let's get to it.

Vince is on commentary here and gets to do his carnival barker stuff. The guy knows how to make a show sound exciting, I have to give him that. DiBiase comes out to do commentary with McMahon due to having to retire late in 1993 due to a bunch of injuries.

Tatanka vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Bigelow is in Ludvig Borga's spot because Borga broke his ankle. Bigelow pounds on Tatanka to start and dropkicks him into the corner. Tatanka literally bounces off of Bigelow before coming back with a chop to take Bigelow down. A DDT puts Bam Bam down again but Tatanka goes up for a cross body, missing Bigelow by a mile. This is a REALLY hot start so far. Bigelow crushes Tatanka in the corner with a splash and things slow down somewhat.

Tatanka gets in a shot to the head and tries a top rope sunset flip, only to have Bam Bam sit on him. When all else fails, sit on the other guy. Off to a bearhug for about two minutes before Bigelow drops him with a shoulder block. Tatanka starts his war path thing so Bam Bam decks him in the head with an enziguri to drop him. The moonsault misses though and Tatanka goes up again, this time hitting the cross body for the pin.

Rating: C+. Shockingly hot opener here and if you cut the bear hug in half or so, this is a really solid match. They stuck to the formula really well here and the match was good as a result. This is one of the nice surprises in wrestling: on paper this sounded horrible but it turned out to be a pretty nice match. Good opener.

We recap the tag title match, which is a rare instance where it's all about the challengers rather than the champions. Owen Hart was the only Hart Brother eliminated in the Survivor Series match against Shawn and his Knights, which ticked him off. Owen had been whipped into Bret on the apron and the distraction let Shawn roll Owen up for the pin.

This caused Owen to cut a heel promo, talking about how he was tired of being in Bret's shadow and wanting a match with him to escape it. Bret of course said no, but instead offered to team up with Owen to get his brother his first championship. Owen talked about leading the team but seemed genuinely ok at this point. For some reason we also see the Quebecers losing the tag titles to the 1-2-3 Kid and Marty Jannetty for a single week for some reason.

The Harts talk about all the teams they're going to give title shots to once they win the belts tonight.

Tag Titles: Bret Hart/Owen Hart vs. Quebecers

The Quebecers are managed by Johnny Polo, who would change his name to Raven in ECW. Pierre and Bret start things off with the challenger taking over. Off to Owen to work on the arm with his signature spinning counter to a wristlock. Off to Jacques and they botch something, but Owen hits a quick suplex to keep things on track. An enziguri gets two for Owen and it's back to Bret.

After a bunch of rollups by Bret, everything breaks down and the Quebecers take over. Actually scratch that as Owen hits a kind of spear into a rollup for two and the Harts stand tall. It's Bret vs. Jacques with Hart in control until it's back to Owen for a gutwrench suplex for two. Bret comes back in, only to get powerslammed down by Pierre. A pair of knees to the back gets two and it's back to Jacques.

That goes nowhere so Pierre comes in to jump into a boot. Owen comes back in and belly to bellys Jacques down before hooking the Sharpshooter. Pierre bulldogs Owen down for a fast save of course and it's back to Pierre legally. Owen dropkicks both Quebecers down and it's off to Bret again. For some reason both champions are allowed to stay in the ring for way too long. Pierre is atomic dropped to the floor, and now we get to the turning point of the match: Johnny Polo holds the ropes open to send Bret to the floor. Bret comes up holding his knee and he's in big trouble.

Pierre rams the knee into the barricade to further the damage and the match turns into a kind of sloppy brawl on the floor. Owen finally throws Bret back into the ring and the leg work begins. Jacques puts on a half crab but Owen makes a fast save. The champions load up the Cannonball (kind of an aided Swanton) but Bret rolls away. Instead of tagging though, Bret tries the Sharpshooter...and the referee stops the match for the knee injury.

Rating: B-. This is one of those matches where you can look at it in multiple ways. From a match standpoint, it's a standard tag match with the faces and heels doing exactly what they would be expected to do. On the other hand, the idea here was about setting up Owen's heel turn, and the ending does that perfectly. There was no reason for Bret to not tag at the end and it sets Owen off as it should.

Post match Owen glares at Bret and paces back and forth. Bret manages to pull himself up but can barely stand up. Owen kicks the leg out, officially turning heel to HUGE booing. He leaves so here are some officials to come check on Bret. Ray Rougeau, a reporter for WWF at this point, comes out to interview Bret while he's on his back in agony. For some reason that cracks me up.

Owen is in the back and goes on a huge tirade about how selfish Bret is and how Bret cost him the biggest match of his career. Bret is being carried to the back and has to watch this promo on the video screen. Owen's face here is great as he unleashes all this pent up anger and frustration on Bret, saying he'll win the Rumble because he doesn't have to count on Bret. This would be the top feud for the next eight months or so.

Intercontinental Title: IRS vs. Razor Ramon

Guess who is defending here. JR and Gorilla Monsoon do commentary for this match. IRS goes on a big rant about how evil the crowd here is for not paying their taxes, even though they have about three months left to file. Razor goes off on IRS to start, knocking him out to the floor. IRS comes back with some forearms but Razor punches him right back down to take over again.

Ramon hits a bunch of basic stuff like atomic drops and clotheslines for some two counts, but IRS ducks under a clothesline to send Razor out to the floor. Back in and IRS goes up but jumps into a boot. For one of the only times I can EVER remember this happening, IRS avoids the foot and drops an elbow for two instead. WHY IS THAT SO HARD FOR PEOPLE TO DO???

We hit the chinlock for well over a minute before Razor fights up and hits the fallaway slam. The referee gets knocked out in the corner and IRS grabs his briefcase, only for Razor to take it back and clock him in the head with it. No referee though, so Razor loads up a belly to back superplex. There's still no referee, so Razor sets for the Edge, only to have Shawn run out and clock him with the fake IC Title. IRS finally wakes up and pins Razor for the title.

Rating: D+. This wasn't bad but the overbooking hurt it a lot. This

should have lasted about three minutes less and it would have been a lot better. Oddly enough I don't remember IRS being champion at all, but then again this is the remastered version so maybe they really cleaned things up.

Or maybe another referee comes out to explain the interference and the match is restarted. Razor hits the Edge to retain.

Bearer and Undertaker are making a coffin for Yoko.

We recap the world title match, which is Yoko being scared of Taker and Taker being one of the last hopes to stop the monster. Apparently the contract was signed before Yoko and company knew it was a casket match. Taker I believe debuted his popping out of the casket spot in this feud.

WWF World Title: The Undertaker vs. Yokozuna

They stare each other down to start and Taker fires off his uppercuts to stagger the champion. A clothesline puts Yoko down and another uppercut puts Yoko on the floor. Taker is sent into the steps and it's immediately no sold, scaring Yoko to death again. There's Old School but the jumping clothesline misses as Yoko ducks. Why does no one else ever think of doing that?

They fight over a chair on the floor which winds up going upside Yoko's head. There's a plastic chair to the back of the champion but Yoko grabs the trusty salt to blind Taker. Now it's Taker's back getting hit with the chair and we head back inside. A clothesline puts Taker down but he fights out of the casket. Taker wins a slugout in the middle of the ring but Yoko belly to belly suplexes him down. Come on. You know that's not holding him down. Taker pops up and grabs Yoko by the throat and hits a DDT to put the champion down again.

Yoko is placed in the casket but here's Crush to block Taker from closing it. Taker slugs him down so here's Great Kabuki and Tenryu but Taker beats them down as well. Yoko is still out cold in the casket. Bam Bam Bigelow comes in now and it's 4-1 in the ring. One has to wonder why Paul Bearer doesn't go over and close the casket but this match doesn't seem to be the most logical one. Fuji and Cornette have stolen the Urn.

Yoko finally gets out of the casket as Bearer beats up Fuji and Cornette, stealing the Urn back. He uses it to recharge Taker, who fights off all four mercenaries. Now it's Adam Bomb to make it technically 8-1 but Taker fights everyone off with the salt bucket. Jeff Jarrett comes in as well, as do the Headshrinkers. That makes it NINE wrestlers (Yoko, Crush, Kabuki, Tenryu, Bigelow, Jarrett, Samu, Fatu, Adam Bomb) against Undertaker.

AND HE GETS UP. Diesel comes out and they get Taker in the coffin but he fights ALL OF THEM OFF. Yoko steals the Urn and hits Taker in the head with it before opening the Urn. Green smoke comes out of it and Taker now is powerless. Everyone hits a bunch of moves on him as this goes on WAY too long. After ALL THAT, Taker is put in the coffin and Yoko retains the title.

Rating: F. On a major wrestling show, The Undertaker just fought off ten men until green smoke was released to drain him of his power. I've seen Japanese anime that makes more sense than this. Oh and the match itself, as in the one on one part, might have gone about six minutes.

BUT IT GETS WORSE!

The heels all push the coffin away when a gong goes off. Smoke comes out of the casket....and a FREAKING CAMERA FEED FROM INSIDE THE CASKET POPS UP ON THE SCREEN. Taker says his soul lives in everyone and he can't be extinguished. He says there's going to be a rebirth of the Undertaker and he won't rest in peace. Then electrical noises go off and we get something like an inverse camera shot (as in it's all in black and white but what is white is black and what is black is white).

Then, to REALLY hammer home the point, the image on the screen starts to rise up through the top of the screen (which should be the top of the casket, meaning it should be ramming into the people that put him in the freaking casket) and A FREAKING BODY RISES OUT OF THE TOP OF THE SCREEN. AS IN A TANGIBLE BODY (which might have been played by Marty Jannetty).

In other words, WWF just said Taker is something like Jesus. Oh and one other thing to really make sure this is stupid: YOU CAN'T SEE IT. All I can see are some quick shots of it when flashes go off. This is one of

those things that embarrasses me as a wrestling fan. I mean....WOW.

The usual Rumble interviews eat up some time.

Royal Rumble

Scott Steiner is #1 and Samu is #2. Also the intervals are every 90 seconds this year so the entrances will come in faster than ever. Scott pounds away to start and hits a butterfly suplex as Samu tries to hang on. He does indeed survive and kills Scott with a clothesline. Rick Steiner is #3 and Samu is in BIG trouble. After some suplexes he's out very quickly (but not before getting his head caught in the top and middle rope which is always kind of scary looking), giving us the Battle of the Steiners.

That battle literally lasts six seconds as Kwang (Savio Vega in a mask, allegedly Asian here) is #4. Scott suplexes Kwang down and Owen Hart is #5 to BIG heel heat. The heels take over and Owen actually dumps Rick out. That's one of the rare times where the constant pushing against the ropes worked. Bart Gunn is #6 and things speed up a bit. No one really does anything so here's Diesel at #7. This is where things pick up as this match is without a doubt Diesel's coming out party.

He beats on everyone and throws out Bart, Scott, Owen and Kwang inside of 45 seconds. Bob Backlund is #8 and immediately goes for the leg. He actually gets Diesel up against the ropes and upside down, but Diesel will have none of that. Who would believe these two would have a world title match in Madison Square Garden later in the year? Backlund is gone quickly. Billy Gunn is #9 and doesn't even last fifteen seconds.

We cut to the back where Kabuki and Tenryu are destroying Lex Luger. After Diesel stands around for a bit, he has to throw out Virgil who is #10 in about thirty seconds (causing DiBiase to laugh loudly and get in some good verbal jabs). Note that the fans are LOUDLY chanting for Diesel here, who had NEVER gotten a reaction until this point. No one has been able to stand up to Diesel at all so far. #11 is Randy Savage. This should be a bit better challenge I'd think.

Savage goes right for him and pounds away on the big man in the corner

before peppering him with jabs. He has Diesel in trouble but Jeff Jarrett is #12 to save the not yet Big Daddy Cool. We hear about Jarrett wanting to become WWF Champion so he'll be a famous country singer in Nashville. And people wonder why he never got over until he completely changed everything about his character.

Savage is thrown to the apron by Jarrett but Randy comes back and eliminates Jeff with ease. Crush, who Savage HATES at this point, is #13. Diesel just kind of chills in the corner as Savage beats up Crush. The numbers finally catch up with Savage though until Crush eliminates him with ease. Doink is #14 and he gets beaten up as well but not tossed. Here's his big rival Bam Bam Bigelow at #15 and it's 3-1 now. Bigelow easily thows the clown out ala the Spike Dudley throw from ECW.

Mabel is #16 and dang there are some big guys in there. He goes right for Diesel in a terrifying preview of Summerslam 95. Mabel cleans house until Sparky Plugg (Bob Holly as a racecar driver and debuting here as a replacement for the 1-2-3 Kid) is #17. Shawn Michaels is #18 and stares down Diesel to start. Everyone gets on Diesel and Shawn gives the final push to eliminate him. Diesel gets a VERY audible ovation and chant as he leaves.

Mo, Mabel's totally useless partner, is #19. Nothing of note happens so here's Greg Valentine in a one night only appearance at #20. Mabel misses a charge in the corner and Shawn is gorilla pressed by Crush but not eliminated for some reason. Tatanka comes in at #21. To recap we've got Plugg, Valentine, Tatanka, Mabel, Bigelow, Crush, Michaels and Mo in there. Valentine puts Michaels on the apron but can't get him out.

Kabuki is #22 and almost everyone gangs up on Mabel to dump him out. It's amazing how much easier it is to see with the big fat purple tub of goo out of there. Lex Luger (looking FINE after that attack like 15 minutes ago) is #23 and he cleans house. There are ten people in the ring right now but there goes Kabuki at the hands of Lex. Luger clotheslines Bigelow down and here's Tenryu at #24.

There are WAY too many people in there right now. Like seriously, do we need FREAKING MO in there? Or Valentine? Those are bodies you could dump

out and no one would care. Luger and Tenryu go at it as Shawn is almost dumped out. Bastion Booger is supposed to be #25 but he's not here for some reason (Vince says it was supposed to be Bret Hart but more on that in a bit). I believe there are nine people in there at the moment so Booger not coming in was a good thing. Granted it was a good thing either way but you get the idea. Rick Martel is #26 and nothing happens.

For your big face pop of the match (other than Diesel): Bret Hart is #27 and limping very badly. Today, people would have a bandage on the knee and charge to the ring because modern wrestling is stupid. Fatu is #28 and DEAR FREAKING GOODNESS THROW SOMEONE OUT ALREADY! A bunch of guys team up and FINALLY throw Crush out as Marty Jannetty is #29. Naturally he goes right for Shawn and punches Shawn to the apron.

Adam Bomb is #30, giving us a ridiculous THIRTEEN FINAL PEOPLE in the Rumble. The final group is Bigelow, Sparky, Shawn, Mo (seriously, FREAKING MO?), Valentine, Tatanka, Luger, Tenryu, Martel, Hart, Fatu, Jannetty and Bomb. Bret saves Shawn (shocking I know) to dump out Sparky, thank goodness. Bret beats on everyone as we still need to get rid of more people. Everyone beats on everyone for awhile and nothing is happening. DiBiase: "The smart thing to do is go after Bret Hart's knee." Vince: "The smart thing to do is throw people out of the ring." Did....did Vince just burn Ted Dibiase?

Martel dumps Valentine but is quickly dumped out by Tatanka. Luger throws out Bomb and Mo is FINALLY put out as well. Bigelow tosses Tatanka and Lex forearm Bam Bam out. Jannetty goes out to get us down to Luger, Hart, Fatu, Tenryu and Shawn. Tenryu rams Shawn and Fatu's heads together which only hurts Shawn of course. Luger and Bret put out Tenryu and it's Bret vs. Shawn (duh). Luger goes for Fatu's head and gets superkicked for being stupid.

The heels put Luger on the apron but he fights them both off and clotheslines Fatu into a 360. Bret dumps Fatu and Luger dumps Shawn and we're down to two. They slug it out and Luger picks up Bret, but they both fall out at the same time, giving us a double elimination to end the Rumble.

Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade. The pacing is TERRIBLE with guys like Sparky Plugg and Mo staying in for over twenty minutes each, but the action is solid for the most part. The stuff with Diesel is excellent and it truly made him a star. The ending stuff once they got rid of about seven guys in 90 seconds was good too, but stuff in the middle didn't work all that well.

Post match there's a disagreement over who wins but both guys have their music played. This would lead to a somewhat complicated decision where there was a coin toss and two world title matches at Mania. This goes on for about eight minutes or so but it's just the referees arguing and both guys saying they won. Replays don't really show us anything either. They do a good job here of making it impossible to tell who won, unlike in 2005 when it was clear that one of them (I want to say Cena) hit first. They're finally declared co-winners to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show is one where it's very hard to come up with an overall grade. I really liked the opener and the tag match and Rumble were both good, but when a show has what might be the dumbest moment in wrestling history (and that covers A LOT of stupid moments), it's brought down a lot. Early 1994 was not a good time for the WWF but once they finally picked Bret as the guy, things got a lot better.

Ratings Comparison

Tatanka vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Original: B

Redo: C+

Quebecers vs. Bret Hart/Owen Hart

Original: A+

Redo: B-

Razor Ramon vs. IRS

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Yokozuna vs. Undertaker

Original: F

Redo: F

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: C-

DANG I liked this show a lot better on the first viewing.

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

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205 Live – January 2, 2018: The Enzo P-A-R-A-D-O-X

205 Live

Date: January 2, 2018

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Vic Joseph

So this show's lull is somehow STILL GOING as Cruiserweight Champion Enzo Amore was hospitalized due to the flu, meaning the title match against Cedric Alexander was postponed yet again. There's really nothing going on at the moment because we're stuck waiting on the title match (and hopefully the title change) so there's a good chance this is going to be another lame duck show. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Amore being sick and Alexander teaming with Goldust of all people to defeat Ariya Daivari and Drew Gulak. If Goldust is this show's idea of a big deal, just turned the Mixed Match Challenge into an hour show and be done with it.

Opening sequence.

Akira Tozawa vs. TJP

This is TJP's first match back in three months. Technical sequence to start until TJP hides in the ropes to avoid a charge. That's fine with Tozawa, who slams him head first into the mat twice in a row. Some overblown stomping in the corner keeps TJP down as this is quite the welcome back to the roster. A suicide dive is blocked by TJP's raised boot to the shoulder though, followed by said shoulder going into the post.

There's a slingshot hilo and TJP holsters the finger guns. I still like this guy no matter how much he's loathed more often than not. Tozawa's

shoulder is cranked in various painful looking ways before TJP just stands on his face. The fans want Enzo (mark Miami down as one of the dumb cities) as TJP gets two off a hammerlock belly to back suplex. I love it when they mix up the offense like that. It's better than five armbars.

A double arm crank doesn't get TJP very far but a kick to the head gets two. Tozawa is back up with a boot to the face of his own, followed by a snap Saito suplex. A suicide dive is good for two but the top rope backsplash is easily broken up. TJP sends him arm first into the post and the Detonation Kick is good for the pin at 9:55.

Rating: C. I still like TJP a lot and that's likely to be the case for a good while. He's smooth in the ring and is a good, cocky heel who can either be pushed or put someone over in almost any given circumstance. Unless he was injured, I'm not sure why he was on the shelf so long as he's someone who should be around more often. Hopefully Tozawa doesn't take his place on the list of talented people who are stuck on the sidelines for no logical reason.

Goldust comes up to Cedric Alexander in the back. After admitting that he's not under 205 pounds, Goldust talks about how he's here to help Cedric on his quest for gold. They could be a great team! Like Turner and Hooch! I know Enzo is out with the flu at the moment, but sweet goodness there was no one better than GOLDUST to replace him? That's really the best option they have? That's how much they think of this show?

Here's Jack Gallagher to demand a rematch with Hideo Itami. First though, we see a clip of Itami injuring Gallagher's friend Brian Kendrick. After looking at the clip multiple times, here's Itami for the match, only to have Gallagher beat him down with the umbrella. Itami falls down in short order and a pipe falls out of the umbrella. No match of course. That's quite the dastardly act and does the right thing here in getting Gallagher over more than anyone else in the whole thing.

The Zo Train says last night was an injustice because their open challenge was only for people on the 205 Live roster. Goldust comes up and insults their breath. Keep bringing that star power buddy.

Ariya Daivari/Drew Gulak vs. Cedric Alexander/Goldust

Cedric and Daivari feels each other out to start until Daivari pulls him down by the hair. That earns him a dropkick though and it's off to an armbar. The fans want Goldust and get their wish as he cranks on Gulak's arm for a change. Goldust tries to run the ropes but stops for a second because he needs to catch his breath in a funny bit.

For some reason Daivari stands there before kneeing him in the ribs (Politeness maybe?) and hands it off to Gulak for an armbar. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Cedric sends Daivari into the buckle. There's no tag though and Cedric is sent face first in as well, cutting off whatever momentum he had built up.

It's back to the chinlock as Nigel sends well wishes to Enzo. Cedric is sent into the steps and let's hit that chinlock all over again. The Neuralizer finally gets Cedric out of trouble and the hot tag brings in Goldust. House is cleaned and Goldust powerslams both villains. A blind tag brings in Cedric with the springboard clothesline and Goldust helps him on a big flip dive. The Lumbar Check finishes Gulak at 11:55.

Rating: D. Didn't we pretty firmly establish this last night? It's no secret that Goldust and Cedric (or Cedric and a stuffed turtle at this point) can beat these goons but since WE MUST WAIT ON ENZO, this is all they can do anymore. It's almost like the NXT: Redemption season where they would just throw people out there (including Goldust actually) when they needed to extend a story. Pretty dull match, mainly because everything was already established the night before.

Overall Rating: D-. And that right there is why Enzo is a major, major problem on this show. There's really nothing else of value on the show and if he's gone, there's almost nothing important happening on the show. Due to multiple reasons now, we've been sitting around waiting on Cedric vs. Enzo, which will hopefully FINALLY get us back to a normal show around here. The problem though is if Enzo retains, we're stuck waiting on another challenger to rise up and take the title.

Without Enzo around, there's really no point in this show existing, and that's not even considering that it's become 2011 Smackdown: a place

where you put Raw rematches for the sake of filling in TV time because there's nothing else to air. Bring some people up from NXT for some one off appearances, have some crazy five way elimination match, do the freaking challenges from the original NXT or whatever. Just do SOMETHING more interesting than this waste of time.

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