

Interview with Middle Kingdom Wrestling's Big Sam

This interview is with a member of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster. If you're not familiar with MKW (which you very well may not be), check out some of their stuff here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MiddleKingdomWrestling>

Wrestling really is one of the most international sports you're ever going to find. Where else do you have so many people from so many countries coming together in almost any country with so many different styles? One of the coolest things about wrestling is seeing all these styles come together and put on a good match. It's even cooler when you get an interesting mixture of styles, which is where we are here.

You've probably seen wrestling from all over the world at one point or another. It might be the standard American style, the Mexican lucha libre style, the European technical style or something else entirely. One other place entirely is China, where professional wrestling is trying to establish itself. There is talent to be found in China and the surrounding areas, but bringing in outside help can make a difference.

One such talent is Big Sam, a British wrestler who is now performing in China. His size (6'4 and 260lbs) make him stand out with the mostly smaller members of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster not coming close to his physical stature. A British wrestler coming to China makes for an interesting story and I was able to get to hear some of that story. Here's an interview with Big Sam, presented in a question and answer format.

1. How did you get started in wrestling? Were you trained in England?

When I was 14/15, I trained and took part in freestyle amateur wrestling in North Wales. I wrestled mostly within the British Isles (United Kingdom of Great Britain as well as the Republic of Ireland) –

<http://www.angelfire.com/wrestling3/balvinder/index.html>

At the age of 16, I went for my first pro wrestling class held in Sheffield with Hammerlock wrestling (I believed it has closed its operations in Sheffield now). That is where I first learnt to bump and lock up. That was my first real taste of training to be a pro wrestler and I wanted more, however the distance was too far for me and it very impractical. I decided to carry on with freestyle amateur wrestling.

It was not until I was 19 that I started to train pro wrestling more regularly in Rhyl (North Wales), about an hour's drive from my home. I had a few lessons with World of Sport's legend, Orig Williams. Unfortunately these were near his latter years, and the lessons soon became inconsistent to eventually they were called off –

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orig_Williams

I found that I learnt the most wrestling at Basix Pro Wrestling, which was closer to my home and offered me more opportunities. The trainers and owner, "Iron Man" Mike Roberts ran the promotion.

http://prowrestling.wikia.com/wiki/Mike_Roberts

It was with Basix Pro Wrestling that I got debuted in my first match in front of a paying crowd in 2007. I was in a battle royal and was eliminated half-way through.

2. What brought you to China and how did your career begin there?

I came to China as an exchange student. There was nothing in the area I was at the time. I carried on teaching some freestyle wrestling while studying there. It was actually a few years later through a comedian that I got to introduced to

former WWE Cruiserweight Classic wrestler, Ho Ho Lun that I got to know there was a small but growing wrestling scene in China. Through that I got introduced to Ho Ho Lun's first trainer, The Slam. He took me and helped me shake of the 'ring rust' and had me bumping again. I wrestled for a couple of start-up promotions throughout China, before landing with Middle Kingdom Wrestling (MKW).

3. You're a good deal bigger and taller than most of the Middle Kingdom Wrestling roster. Do you feel this is a strength for you and how has it affected your in-ring style?

I am a legit 6'4" and 260lbs. I have a huge advantage working in China at this size.

In the UK, I was big but not the biggest. I would work more technical with a few power moves, I kind of brought that to China.

However, as wrestling is still not mature in China, most wrestlers I work with want to take me off my feet in seconds. Ring psychology is thrown in the garbage a lot of the time here. I was very lenient when I first came to China and was bumping a lot for much smaller guys, and I did not really embrace the big man/monster style. I blame myself that I was out of the game for a few years and was being too kind, maybe naïve. Things changed when another British wrestler (Voodoo) came who had a ton of experience and said to me "What the f**k are you doing? No one should make you bump". He would then watch every match and lay into me with strict criticism as well as suggestions. He told my opponents that they shouldn't knock me down right from the bell. I began working a larger man style, which was slower but perfecting the moves that I did. I now work a match with 4 to 5 big moves. I don't try and punch anymore because I believe if I was to punch a guy who was 150lbs he should be knocked out cleanly. I then notice other promotions wanting to book me. I tried to perfect the military press, which is probably my most over move in wrestling. I notice I have a growing fan base, and majority

are Chinese who send me messages complimenting my size, strength as well as my 'old school' style.

4. Middle Kingdom Wrestling offers a wide variety of international talent from a long list of different countries, including French, British, Chinese and Taiwanese wrestlers. How important is it to offer such a variety of talent to the audience?

China is now growing in the pro wrestling scene and is attracted a lot of interest. Chinese like wrestlers who look like WWE guys. They like John Cena, The Shield, AJ Styles and even Sheamus. There for, guys from Europe and the USA are well received, especially if they got a bit of mass to their build and an obvious gimmick.

As MKW was starting, we did not have the biggest roster so we tried to work with other promotions to help us get started. One included a local Chinese promotion, China Wrestling Entertainment (CWE) led by The Slam. Ho Ho Lun helped out as well as a Taiwanese wrestler looking for his break and a French wrestling promotion that was on their way to Thailand. Now we have wrestlers from Italy and New Zealand. We all have slightly different styles, which we try to implement. I would say my style is more American than British now.

I personally think it is important to display different styles to keep the product interesting but not go too far from the original product and the idea of professional wrestling. We have been involved in shows that have boxing, MMA, kick-boxing and other combat sports, and pro wrestling have been welcomed to it. This has been good because usually these shows have huge budgets and attract audiences that are easily 1000+. This also shows that the fans want to watch a bit of everything rather than one whole show dedicated to just one sport.

5. Wrestling doesn't have the strongest history in China. How can Middle Kingdom Wrestling expand and become a top player in

the country?

Wrestling is growing, and WWE have taken onboard several Chinese born wrestlers in their training performance center. I have been in China for several years and have witness pro wrestling growing here. I have seen promotions come and go within China as usually they fail as they try to invest too much and lose all their money after several months. MKW has been smarter than most, and is slowly building up and now have their own training center in north China. MKW has tried to make several partnerships with other promotions but have wormed out the ones who don't want to return the favour when we book and pay their wrestlers. Wrestling industry in China is becoming cut-throat now, so MKW is trying to be fair and work within our means. MKW has many wrestlers from around the world that want to work with them, however, the new strategy is to concentrate on our current product and invest their rather than spend bringing in many wrestlers from overseas like MKW did in the past.

6. Where can fans see you and all other Middle Kingdom Wrestling content?

www.MiddleKingdomWrestling.com

www.Facebook.com/MKWchina

WeChat: MKWrestling

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MiddleKingdomWrestling>

Impact Wrestling – February 8, 2018: Just Like In Canada

Impact Wrestling

Date: February 8, 2018

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Sonjay Dutt

It's a new era around here and that started last week with some big time changes. Well mainly one as Austin Aries returned to the company and won the World Title in a big surprise last week. Now we head towards the next pay per view in April, but there's a lot of stuff to get through first. Let's get to it.

We look back at Aries returning and winning the title last week, including a quick bio for those of you unfamiliar with him.

El Hijo de Fantasma/Rohit Kaju vs. Taiji Ishimori/Matt Sydal

Kaju is a newcomer. Fantasma and Ishimori get things going as Dutt (who has a very good voice for announcing) talks about the new Indian faction the Desi Hit Squad. They feel each other out to start without much happening early on. Instead it's off to Sydal to work on Kaju's arm, followed by some shots to the leg.

Ishimori comes in and works on the leg as well, only to get caught in a neckbreaker to put both guys down. Back from a break with everything breaking down and Kaju hitting a suicide dive onto Sydal. Back in and Ishimori gets caught in an armbar, only to get up without much effort and bring Sydal in again. Matt fires off the chops in the corner but Fantasma throws Sydal into a knee from Kaju for two. Everything breaks down (again) and Ishimori's top rope double knees sets up Sydal's Shooting Star to pin Kaju at 15:45.

Rating: C. Another match here with a bunch of people being thrown into the ring at once without much particular rhyme or reason. There should be more to a match with three champions involved (Fantasma is AAA Latin

American Champion) but that's how things work in Impact: just throw people out there and hope for the best. Kaju was pretty average but nothing terrible.

Austin Aries was having a press conference after winning the title and said he doesn't have a contract. So he's Cody from Ring of Honor last year. He's not worried about losing the title at a non-Impact event because, come on, he's Austin Aries. Eli Drake storms in and wants a rematch so it's on for next week.

We see a very long portion of Bobby Roode vs. Austin Aries from Destination X 2012 with Aries winning the World Title for the first time.

Cult of Lee vs. Tech

Yes Tech, comprised of Monroe and Reed. The Cult has LAX's bandannas around their faces and the beating is on in a hurry. Lee throws Reed around and it's already time for the Cult to start taking turns on him in the corner. They're not wasting time tonight. A double elbow gives Konley two but it's heel miscommunication to set up the hot(ish) tag to Monroe. That's cut off in short order though and a spike piledriver is enough to give Konley the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D+. Just a quick tag match here to keep the Cult of Lee going. They're not exactly interesting but it's much better to move them away from the X-Division. There's nothing else they can do there and the tag division needs them far more. Maybe they can do something and maybe they can't but they need a chance and that's what they're getting.

Post match Konnan pops up on screen to say LAX is coming for the Cult.

Allie gives Kieran Hogan a pep talk when someone brings her a big envelope. It's a massive Valentines Day card, inviting her to meet whoever sent it next week.

Knockouts Title: Laurel Van Ness vs. Kieran Hogan

Van Ness is defending after Hogan got a fluke pin last week. Laurel wastes no time in throwing Kieran into the corner to start and some hair mares give the champ two. A twist of the wrist puts Hogan down on the mat

and a curb stomp makes things even worse. The Unprettier is broken up and Hogan grabs the same rollup she used for the pin last week, only to get two this week. Instead it's a bicycle kick to the face before the Unprettier can retain Laurel's title at 4:10.

Rating: D. This was exactly what you would have expected it to be as Hogan didn't do anything to win the previous match. It's fine to have her get a hope spot with the rollup but it's not like anyone was really expecting her to win the title here. Laurel can move on to her big match with Allie and that's where she belongs.

Post match Laurel stays on Kieran until Allie makes the save. Makes sense.

Cage debuts next week.

Someone is filming Lashley.

Ethan Carter III is ready to win the #1 contenders match and go on to become an EC3 Time World Champion.

Video on Aries vs. Drake.

Jimmy Jacobs says he's not a bad guy but he wants Abyss here. If Joseph Park won't bring Abyss, they'll make him do it.

Sydal talks about his spiritual adviser bringing out what it took to win the match earlier. Ishimori is with him and Sydal wishes him luck in next week's title defense against Fantasma. I'm still not feeling any of these people.

OVE jumps Lashley and puts him in the trunk of a car.

Hania the Huntress vs. Amber Nova

This is Hania's in-ring debut. Amber tries a quick crucifix for two but gets take into the corner by the bigger Hania. A sunset flip gives Nova two and some bad looking dropkicks keep Hania in trouble. Amber grabs a hurricanrana but uses it to pull Hania face first into the buckle in a cool move. Another hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb though and

a reverse DDT gives Hania the pin at 3:27.

Rating: D. Another quick match here to establish Hania, who has a great look and got to show off a lot here. Nova wasn't bad either though and that's a good sign for the future of the division. They need some fresh blood to fill in the lack of Gail Kim (oh I'm sure we're not done with her yet, at least in some form) and these two work well enough.

Post match Rosemary jumps Hania in revenge for a few weeks back.

Johnny Impact vs. Alberto El Patron vs. Moose vs. Ethan Carter III

The winner gets a World Title shot at some point in the future. Everyone fights to the floor to start and it's an early double teaming to keep Moose in early trouble. Impact is put down as well and it's Moose being taken back inside for a double whip into the corner. Johnny comes back in to beat on the villains but gets thrown down again.

As is always the case, Carter and El Patron get in a fight over who gets to go for the pin, allowing Impact to come in with a corkscrew dive to take them both down. Moose is back up to throw everyone around, only to have Impact drop him as well. Everyone slugs it out and we take a break. Back with the brawl heading into the crowd with Moose being thrown into a fence. He comes up holding his knee, leaving the other three to fight on the other side of the crowd.

Johnny steals someone's crutches and beats on both guys, which he doesn't even give back. Instead Alberto throws Johnny into the trash but he comes back with what looked like a can to the head. Back in and Johnny gets DDT'd, only to reverse a double superplex. Johnny can't powerbomb both guys but Moose limps back in and takes Carter, allowing Johnny to powerbomb Alberto.

Moose throws people around but the knee is keeping him from running. Johnny reverses a powerbomb into the hurricanrana though and Carter plants Moose with the 1%er. The flip neckbreaker gives Johnny two on Carter but Alberto comes back in with the Backstabber on Impact. The cross armbreaker has Carter in trouble until Moose makes another save. Moose goes outside with Alberto, leaving Johnny to roll Carter up for the

pin at 20:33.

Rating: B-. Moose's knee injury (which is apparently legitimate) considered, this was about as good as it could have been. You're only going to get so far with the same four way tropes and the same match that we've done so many times. It was energetic but the spots were the same and that doesn't make for anything all that exciting. Impact winning is the best call as Impact vs. Aries feels like a big deal.

Overall Rating: D+. While not a terrible show, there really wasn't much to see here. They were trying to do some new stuff but it felt a lot like the Canada tapings: they're just throwing new people out there and not really giving us time to get to know them. Now this was nowhere near as bad because the new names weren't getting big spots, but it still feels like they're restarting again. When you do that this often, it gets old in a hurry and that's what happened here. Not the worst and not boring, but there wasn't much of a spark.

One more note: Dutt was very good on commentary, sounding both knowledgeable, excited and interesting at the same time.

Results

Taiji Ishimori/Matt Sydal b. Rohit Kaju/El Hijo de Fantasma – Shooting star press to Kaju

Cult of Lee b. Tech – Spike piledriver to Monroe

Laurel Van Ness b. Kieran Hogan – Unprettier

Hania the Huntress b. Amber Nova – Reverse DDT

Johnny Impact b. Alberto El Patron, Moose and Ethan Carter III – Rollup to Carter

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<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history->

[of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/](#)

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Mixed Match Challenge – February 6, 2018: It's Growing On Me

Mixed Match Challenge Episode #4

Date: February 6, 2018

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Beth Phoenix

We're getting closer to the end of the first round and we already have a substitution. This week Goldust will team with Mandy Rose, who is a replacement for the injured Alicia Fox. Granted it's not like this is probably going to mean much, but you never can quite tell around here. Let's get to it.

The announcers show us how to interact with the show.

Earlier today, Jimmy and Naomi promise to put Goldust and Mandy in the Uso Penitentiary.

Goldust and Mandy have a penitentiary of their own. They can't come up with anything better than that?

This week's interactive gimmick: voting on the guest referee. Daniel

Bryan is chosen over Kurt Angle with a 68-32 margin.

First Round: Jimmy Uso/Naomi vs. Goldust/Mandy Rose

Jimmy and Naomi dance a bit before the match. The men get things going and that means an early dance off. Jimmy starts running the ropes and Goldust asks for a breather because he's too old for this stuff. A hiptoss puts Jimmy down but he kicks Goldust away, only to have him go over and kiss Mandy's hand.

The teams take turns hugging but Jimmy one ups it by kissing Naomi, much to Goldust's shock. Goldust isn't sure what to do so Bryan starts the YES chant and Mandy doesn't seem opposed. He goes for the kiss but gets rolled up. Bryan won't count because that's not right so it's off to the women instead. Mandy messes with Naomi's hair and the fight is on, including a sliding slap for one.

We cut to Lana and Rusev snarking on the match and come back to Mandy stomping away. Beth accuses Corey of reducing Mandy to eye candy. Wasn't that what she came in as? Is that really reducing? Mandy slaps Jimmy for some reason, allowing Naomi to get in a clothesline. The hot tag brings in Jimmy for his clotheslines on Goldust.

The husband and wife hit stereo enziguris but charge into stereo powerslams. Goldust grabs the Final Cut on Jimmy but Naomi makes the save, followed by a big dive onto Mandy. The distraction lets Jimmy hit the superkick and Superfly Splash for the pin at 10:01. Bryan was a complete non-factor here and I forgot he was guest referee until way after the show was over.

Rating: C-. I'm starting to dig this show more and more every week. At the end of the day, there's no story to these matches so really, the only option you have is to set up something like this in short order. The whole husband/wife vs. two random people being paired together was fine enough and the match was fairly entertaining. It's the definition of getting what you can out of nothing and that's often more fun than some lame story.

Post match Rusev and Lana come out to say they're the best married couple

around here. Next week they won't be singing, unless it's a song about Lana being #1. Lana promises to crush Bayley and Elias next week in celebrating of the ravishing Rusev Day.

Bayley and Elias can't seem to agree on singing or hugging.

Overall Rating: C. This is actually becoming one of my favorite shows to watch every week. It's not because of the quality obviously but there's something to be said about such a laid back show with what seems like almost no interference from Vince and company. These are just four people out there having a little bit of fun and filling in some time. That's a very nice change of pace over THIS IS THE MOST SERIOUS AND IMPORTANT SHOW EVER. More of the same here and that's nice for a change.

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<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – September 8, 2003 (2018 Redo): On Third

Thought....

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 8, 2003

Location: Von Braun Civic Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're closing in on Unforgiven and the big story is....well I'm not sure actually. Maybe it's HHH vs. Goldberg? Or is it Shane McMahon vs. Kane? Or is it whatever Vince McMahon and company are up to when he crosses over to this show? Either way last week's show was the slightest upgrade so hopefully that trend continues. The show is opening with Kane vs. Rob Van Dam inside a steel cage as the annual fight against Monday Night Football begins. Let's get to it.

I've actually already done this show. Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/01/22/monday-night-raw-september-8-2003-when-the-highlight-of-the-show-is-mollys-hair-youre-in-trouble/>

The cage is lowered.

Opening sequence.

Kane vs. Rob Van Dam

Pin or escape to win (I'm assuming submission is implied). Kane jumps Rob on his entrance and the beating is on in a hurry. Van Dam gets a boot up in the corner though and the basement dropkick puts Kane down again. That just earns Rob a trip into the cage and Kane crushes his head against the steel like a violent monster should. Van Dam is already busted so Kane sends him into the cage again.

Kane blocks the kicks and throws him into the cage for the third time in a row. Rob crotches him on top though and a top rope kick to the chest sets up Rolling Thunder. A ram into the cage looks to set up the Five Star but Rob only hits mat. Kane is right back up with an Alley Oop onto the ropes/into the cage. To mix things up, Kane sends him into the cage a

few more times, only to break the wall so Rob can fall out for the win.

And of course not because Eric Bischoff is RIGHT THERE to say it had to be over the top or through the door so that doesn't count. Back from a break with Kane sending him back inside and sending him into the cage over and over again. The door is slammed on Rob's head but Kane lets him climb halfway up the cage. A few kicks allow Rob to get even further, only to be pulled down for a super chokeslam and the pin.

Rating: D-. Good night this was boring. It was nearly fifteen minutes of Kane throwing him into the cage over and over with nothing changing from beginning to end. Kane is a monster and that's all well and good, but now I'm supposed to buy Shane McMahon as having a chance against him? After this kind of destruction of a former Intercontinental Champion?

Van Dam is taken out on a stretcher.

We look at Goldberg running through Evolution last week.

Here's Bischoff for some announcements before Steve Austin gives the State of the Raw Address tonight. First up: Kane vs. Shane is official for Unforgiven. He's also changing a match at the pay per view. Now it's going to be JR/King vs. Al Snow/Jonathan Coachman with the winners being the permanent Raw commentators. As for tonight, it's Goldberg/a mystery partner vs. HHH/a mystery partner with Bischoff picking the partners. The partners are going to be Flair and Orton aren't they? Also, what does it say that Coach/Snow vs. JR/King is a major upgrade? That's how bad things were looking.

Lance Storm vs. Rico

After I take a few seconds to get my eyes back in my head from seeing Jackie Gayda here, we see Storm worrying to Goldust about being called boring tonight. Goldust is proud of Storm's progress though. Last week he was jaywalking and had a double bacon cheeseburger with extra pickles. Goldust: "And who was pleasuring themselves with a pop up book?" Storm: "That was you man."

Storm even does the Goldust breath and actually does it quite well.

Before the match, Rico tries to start the BORING chants but gets RICO SUCKS instead. Storm punches him in the mouth to start and grabs a suplex for two. A rake of the eyes cuts Storm off though and let's talk about the Unforgiven tag match. Rico's hiptoss into a neckbreaker gets two and it's off to the chinlock. Storm comes back with clotheslines and a kiss to Jackie (sexual assault isn't boring) and a springboard missile dropkick puts Rico away. Storm's celebration doesn't work that well given the lack of music.

Bischoff won't tell HHH who the partner will be. Given that it's going to be Orton or Flair, I'm not sure why he won't say anything.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Molly Holly/Gail Kim

Having Trish run through all the random partners like this isn't exactly showcasing any talent or depth to the division. Molly and Jackie get things going as JR thinks the villains are jealous of Trish. Haven't they said that multiple times already? Jackie rolls her up for two, followed by a basement dropkick for the same on Gail. A double DDT plants Jackie as King says JR needs to be taking notes.

Due to reasons of stupidity brought on by jealousy, Gail throws Jackie over for the tag to Trish. That earns her a Thesz press as Trish starts cleaning house. A headlock takeover/headscissor combination takes both villains down but they toss Trish to the floor for a painful looking crash. That's actually enough to give Gail the pin.

Rating: D. I'll certainly take an uninspired motivation over no motivation so the Molly and Gail being jealous of Trish story is fine enough. You can kind of tell what they're building to with Trish's eventual partner and there's nothing wrong with where they're going. If nothing else, Gail is already improving beyond "she's a face who can do hurricanranas". Match was nothing of course, but the crash at the end looked good.

Here's Austin for the State of Raw Address. He chucks the podium over the top because that's just not the Steve Austin style. Before we get to Raw though, there's something he needs to address regarding Unforgiven. HHH vs. Goldberg is title vs. career so HHH is going to do whatever he can to

retain the title. Therefore, if HHH gets disqualified, he loses the title.

Moving on, we have Kane running around like a monster and electrocuting a man's testicles. Note for future reference: Austin shouldn't say testicles. Anyway, that should warrant Austin whipping Kane but that's against the rules. After a meeting with his cabinet (his liquor cabinet that is), he's decided that it sucks and the audience poll agrees.

This brings out Christian before any announcement can be made about Kane, which is rather rude. Christian says that what really sucks is the lack of respect from Austin. He knows he's not getting an apology and the peepulation in Huntsville is outraged over these developments. Austin: "The entire peepulation thinks you're an a*****." Christian: "I want my own talk show!". His win over Jericho last week shows that he's the real thing around here, so the Highlight Reel should be turned into the Peep Show.

This brings out Jericho and the beatdown is on in a hurry. Now one would assume that's a face turn, but Jericho immediately starts yelling at Austin. Jericho calls Austin a bully and a failure as a GM, not to mention a human being. He wants to see Austin fired every single day because the Highlight Reel can't be canceled.

Austin doesn't intend to cancel the show and offers Jericho a beer. Jericho is on to this game though and isn't about to provoke Austin into beating him up. Jericho: "If you want to see me drink a beer with Stone Cold Steve Austin, give me a doo wa diddy diddy dum diddy do". Austin: "That was the absolute worst catchphrase I've ever heard in the history of Monday Night Raw".

Jericho drops the beer Austin throws him though and you can tell things are getting serious. In a funny bit, Austin tosses another one from about a foot away and beer is consumed...but Jericho slaps him on the back. That means a Stunner so beer can fly everywhere, ending this segment which somehow only accomplished adding another stipulation to HHH vs. Goldberg. I mean...am I missing another point to this? Did we really need a five minute Jericho and Austin segment with the same ending that almost all

Austin segments have?

La Resistance/Rob Conway/Rodney Mack/Mark Henry vs.
Hurricane/Rosey/Dudley Boyz

It's a brawl to start (shocking) with the good guys cleaning house and D-Von throwing Spike onto La Resistance. Dupree takes What's Up and it's already table time. Bubba and Henry have the hoss fight on the floor, leaving Rosey to double clothesline Conway and Dupree. It's off to Spike, who actually manages to send Mark outside, where he comes up holding his leg. That'll likely be six months on the shelf.

Hurricane comes in off the hot tag to clean house until Bubba tags himself in for a double Flip Flop and Fly. Spike chases Grenier to the back and Dupree takes a Samoan drop/swinging neckbreaker combination from the heroes. Rosey goes shoulder first into the post, only to have Conway take 3D. Mack gets a Bubba Bomb but Henry is back in with the World's Strongest Slam to pin Bubba. You can feel the energy go out of the arena on the pin.

Rating: D. This got energetic at the end but a ten man tag needs a heck of a lot more than five minutes to go anywhere. Cut out Spike and Conway and this is a little better but still, too many people trying to do too many things. The act that La Resistance vs. the Dudleys is WAY out of gas at this point didn't help either.

Post match La Resistance tries the double spinebuster over the top to put Spike through a table but leave him WAY too short, sending the back of his head off the edge of the table, which doesn't break. Oh but they do put Hurricane through the table to no reaction because the fans are worried that Spike has a broken neck. So they're boring and can't do a table spot safely. Well done guys. But hey, at least they can get cheap anti-American heat and that validates everything.

And now, after one of the scariest looking botches you'll ever see (though Spike seemed to be ok), let's go to Coach, Snow and Bischoff making fun of JR and King. How many people even know they're the Heat commentators? Better yet, why are they the Heat commentators? After that comedic brilliance, Bischoff makes a six man tables match with La

Resistance/Rob Conway vs. the Dudleys at Unforgiven. Coach and Snow have something in store for JR tonight but Gail Kim comes in to want to talk to Eric. This includes shoving him into a locker and sitting on his lap. Ok then.

HHH compares Goldberg to a can of YJ Stinger (energy drink sponsor). The difference is the Stinger gets the job done and Goldberg is nothing but hype.

We look back at the cage match and Van Dam being destroyed.

Unforgiven rundown. All these matches that feel like leftovers from previous pay per views are making me think of spoiled milk.

Shane McMahon is in WWE Studios in Connecticut for an interview but Bischoff interrupts and makes Kane vs. Shane a Last Man Standing match. Again, because Shane isn't a wrestler and can't have a regular match. Shane: "Screw you Eric." Eric: "I just screwed you."

Gail, now minus the coat she had when she went to see Bischoff, adjusts her top while telling Molly that the deal went through and they'll finish Trish next week.

Scott Steiner vs. Steven Richards

Victoria, Test and Stacy Keibler are here. Steiner throws him into the corner to start but Test's distraction lets Steven grab a neckbreaker for two. That just earns him an overhead suplex and some chops in the corner. There's the push-up elbow but Steiner decides to bring Victoria in instead. Test gives Steiner a full nelson slam for two but the Stevie Kick is blocked. Steiner's Flatliner is good for the pin.

Post match Steiner says Stacy should be with him again so let's have ANOTHER Test vs. Steiner match for Stacy's services. This time though, Steiner's services are on the line as well. Therefore, if Test wins, Steiner has to watch Test and Stacy. That took quite the turn and that's not exactly something I need to see.

Next up: Bischoff announcing Flair and Orton as HHH and Goldberg's partners.

Actually we get Coach and Snow in the ring for the “comedy”. It’s the old (and bad) someone’s face on unfunny pictures with a theme of what JR could do after he’s fired. Several involve JR being some sort of woman, or a mule at the end. JR comes to the ring, gets insulted some more and punches Coach out. What is this? Four segments on a match between announcers, a part time wrestler and a commentator? Against the debut of Monday Night Football?

Goldberg doesn’t know who his partner is and doesn’t care. It’s going to be Flair or Orton. I don’t know why this is in any kind of doubt because it’s the only thing Bischoff would logically do.

Goldberg/??? vs. HHH/???

And of course the partners are Orton and Flair respectively.

No match as the beatdown is on and the cage is lowered, trapping them all inside. King of course says that means no one can get in to save them, not understanding the concept of “there is no roof”. Goldberg fights back for a bit until a chair shot takes him down. The bloody Goldberg is beaten down but falls out of the first Pedigree attempt to make this look even worse. The second one Pedigree actually works and HHH talks a lot of trash to end the show. You knew this was coming when Goldberg looked dominant last week because AT BEST he’s allowed to go 50/50 with HHH.

Overall Rating: D-. There were a few spots in there that weren’t as dark as others but that’s as good as I can go. The problem here is it felt like the punted with Monday Night Football being sure to dominate the night. That makes sense, but it’s not a good sign when so much of the show is a repeat or continuation of a story that has been going on FAR too long now. Get to Unforgiven so we can get past it because this is all bad stuff at the moment.

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NXT – February 7, 2018: That's Nice For A Change

NXT

Date: February 7, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're back to the regular shows this week with about two months to go before Takeover: New Orleans. That means it's time for some short form stories before we move on towards the bigger stuff with a few weeks before the important show. That doesn't mean this first period has to be weak though as this is often some of the best material NXT has to offer. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Sanity

Undisputed Era is defending. Adam Cole is here as a second but it's Sanity jumping the champs from behind to start the brawl before the bell. Security comes in and here's William Regal (to a BIG pop) to say enough is enough. This ends tonight with all six men in a tornado tag match. No match here of course.

Heavy Machinery vs. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss

Dozovic and Moss start things off with Otis shoving him down in short

order. A double falling headbutt crushes Moss for an early two but he's right back with a clothesline to the back of the head. It's off to Tino (who the fans don't like) for a good looking dropkick on Knight, followed by a clothesline for Moss.

Riddick isn't happy with Tino for some reason and chops him for another tag. The disagreement allows the hot tag to Otis and house is cleaned in a hurry. Everything breaks down and Moss' rollup with feet on the ropes (how they won the first match) gets two. Knight flips off the apron to take Moss down and the Compactor ends Sabbatelli at 4:10.

Rating: D+. Sabbatelli and Moss aren't exactly killing it out there and I'm not sure how much of a future they have. I'd like to see Tino on his own as he has the look and the attitude to make something work, but the in-ring work might not be there. Heavy Machinery doesn't have the highest ceiling but it's cool to see them get another win.

Post match, Moss walks out on Tino.

Here's Johnny Gargano for his first comments since Takeover. He had never been as confident as he was against Andrade Cien Almas but it didn't work. It's time for him to keep going though and that's because the fans were right there for him when he needed them most. Johnny: "I'M JOHNNY FREAKING WRESTLING!" It took a crutch shot to the back to put him down but now it's time for Johnny to go after Tommaso Ciampa.

This brings out Almas and Zelina Vega though as the feud isn't over. Vega laughs off Johnny wanting respect because he only proved Almas as the better man. Almas can beat Gargano again and again because Gargano is Johnny Loser. The fans want Candice LeRae so Vega shoves Johnny, drawing Candice to the ring to shove her down. Vega goes on a rant about wanting to get rid of Gargano so we're having a title vs. NXT career match. After their previous match, they would be crazy to not do it again.

Shayna Baszler says people against her have three choices: tap, nap or snap. She'll be Women's Champion.

Next week: Pete Dunne vs. Roderick Strong for the UK Title.

Tyler Bate is disappointed by his loss but hes ready to have another Match of the Year against the best NXT has to offer.

Bianca Belair vs. Jessix Hill

Hill offers a left handed handshake to start but Bianca won't let go. Instead it's a torture rack with some squats, followed by the Alley Oop to pin Hill at 1:13. A good chunk of that was spent waiting for the handshake.

Video on Kairi Sane.

Next week: Ember Moon defends against Baszler.

Sanity vs. Undisputed Era

Tornado rules. It's a brawl to start (as it should be) with Sanity getting the better of it, mainly thanks to Dain. The fighting takes us to an early break and we come back with the brawl continuing. Young, Wolfe, O'Reilly and Cole fight to the back, leaving Fish to moonsault Dain for two.

It's kendo stick time, even though I don't remember tornado rules meaning No DQ. Dain pulls it out of Fish's hands though as the other four are back. Fish runs up to the stage and tries a forearm to Dain's face, earning himself a toss off the stage onto everyone else in a big crash. There's something to be said about taking a human and tossing him around with such ease.

Back from another break with Dain pounding on Cole in the ring while everyone else is still down. An enziguri gives Cole a breather but Wolfe is back in with a Batista Bomb. O'Reilly and Fish come back in to double team Wolfe so Dain runs them over. Dain's Michinoku Driver gets two on Fish but Cole superkicks him for a save. Ax and Smash puts Young on the floor but Dain is right back up with the heavy strikes to take over.

Unfortunately Dain's Cannonball through a table misses Cole and Wolfe gets triple teamed. Total Elimination puts Wolfe down but it's Young making the save with the kendo stick. Cole drops him with a superkick though and the Last Shot gets....two? I'd have bet on that being the

finish. Dain is back in and runs everyone over, including a backslash/running dropkick combination. The Ulster Plantation ends Fish at 20:03.

Rating: B. I was very pleased with that ending as I would have bet on it being Dain running through everyone and then getting neutralized just long enough to give the Era the win. Instead this was the Killian Dain Show as he was the unstoppable force and ran through all three members of the team like they could barely touch him. It's nice to see things go in a different direction and it was a wild brawl to get there. That's how this feud should have ended and I'm curious to see where things go next.

Overall Rating: A-. That last line sums things up nicely: I'm curious to see where things go next. How often do you actually look forward to things week to week in WWE? Or most wrestling companies for that matter? NXT knows how to keep you wanting to come back for more and that's a really hard thing to do. I want to see more of Dain and I want to see Gargano vs. Almas II. Throw in the women's division getting more interesting and Ciampa still lurking around and it's a good time to be watching NXT.

Results

Heavy Machinery b. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss – Compactor to Sabbatelli

Bianca Belair b. Jessix Hill – Alley Oop

Sanity b. Undisputed Era – Ulster Plantation to Fish

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New Column: How To Get To Styles vs. Nakamura

I'm not sure what else to call this.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-get-styles-vs-nakamura/>

Smackdown – February 6, 2018: Better Than Lemonade And Purple Stuff

Smackdown

Date: February 6, 2018

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

As is often becoming the case around here, it's a big night with some major matches set for the show. This week we have Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership to AJ Styles for the Smackdown World Title at Fastlane. In addition to that, US Champion Bobby Roode is defending against Rusev on Rusev Day. Let's get to it.

Commissioner Shane McMahon is in the ring to open things up. Shane talks about Sami vs. Owens but doesn't think either of them deserve a shot. Someone he does think something of is General Manager Daniel Bryan.

Daniel comes out and Shane talks about how the two of them listen to the fans every week. Fans: "RUSEV DAY! RUSEV DAY!" Shane: "Duly noted."

Shane asks why Bryan keeps giving Sami and Kevin these chances. Yes, Daniel has changed the WWE landscape with the YES Movement but the Yep Movement is a poor imitation. Shane knows that Bryan wants to be wrestling more than anything and he knows what Bryan is doing. Bryan doesn't quite get it but Shane accuses him of living vicariously through Kevin and Sami.

Before anything of note can be said, cue AJ Styles, to say he's traveled 10,000 miles since the new year began because that's what a champion does. He'll defend the title against anyone who gets a title shot and walk into Wrestlemania as WWE Champion. Simple and to the point here, but if they're not going to put Bryan in the ring (which I don't think they will), they're treading on thin ice by even hinting at it.

Shinsuke Nakamura comes up to AJ in the back and says he'll beat him at Wrestlemania.

Liv Morgan vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte stomps her to the floor and we hit the break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Morgan in control but getting chopped down for her efforts. Morgan's low superkick gets two but Charlotte scores with a neckbreaker and spear. Sarah Logan offers a distraction but just gets herself and Ruby ejected. Charlotte kicks Liv in the face and the Figure Eight makes Morgan tap at 7:59.

Rating: D+. Acceptable match here as Charlotte gets to score a little revenge on the Squad, because that team can keep absorbing losses like this. Charlotte looks dominant but I'm not sure who her next challenger is. Assuming they're setting up the match with Asuka at Wrestlemania, I guess we'll be seeing Charlotte vs. Ruby at Fastlane. That's not exactly big though as Ruby hasn't won much of anything since debuting.

Charlotte says that's one down and two to go.

Video on Roman Reigns at the National Civil Rights Museum for Black

History Month.

Kevin Owens says he'll win.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

Harper runs over Jobber #1 to start and #2 bails straight away, only to be taken down by Rowan. The double spinebuster ends #1 at 1:22.

Post match the Usos come out for the staredown but the Brothers walk past them. Back from a break, the Usos talk about a state of mind. They turn their mind into a prison, which they run. There are a lot of people out here starving but they're not talking about people having cupcakes.

There are a lot of people out here looking thirsty but they're not talking about lemonade or that purple stuff. They're talking about the hunger and thirst for success. They went from "these guys are alright" to the match of the night. It used to be Uso Crazy but now it's DAY ONE ISH! When you feel something creeping up on you, it's not paranoia because it's the Usos. I'm not sure what the heck was said here, but that was some awesome energy and I was digging the whole thing.

And now, the first Smackdown Top Ten List.

10. Tye Dillinger

9. Randy Orton

8. Becky Lynch

7. Usos

6. New Day

5. Bobby Roode

4. Naomi

3. Shinsuke Nakamura

2. Charlotte

1. AJ Styles

Well that...was pointless.

Corey Graves has issues with the list, including New Day being above the Usos and the lack of Rusev.

New Day, answering fan questions tonight, gives Corey Graves a 6% chance in a street fight.

Aiden English says the ring being a canvas is appropriate because art will be happening tonight. Rusev is working out and shouts MACHKA.

Aiden sings Rusev's entrance, complete with sing-a-long words on the screen and a bouncing Rusev head.

US Title: Rusev vs. Bobby Roode

Rusev is challenging. Feeling out process to start as they actually take it to the mat at a slow pace. Rusev takes him down again and we go to an early break. Back with Roode getting two off a Blockbuster but walking into a fall away slam. We hit the chinlock for a good while until a hard shot to the face wakes Roode up.

The running forearm and a clothesline have Rusev in trouble but English offers a distraction. A hard kick to the head gives Rusev two and we take a break. Back again with Roode hitting a spinebuster but going after English, allowing Rusev to get in the Machka Kick. The Accolade is broken up though so they trade rollups for two each. Another Accolade is reversed is reversed into the Glorious DDT to retain the title at 15:49.

Rating: B-. Good match here, though again I wonder why they're refusing to do ANYTHING with Rusev out of the ordinary when he's being cheered like no one else week to week. It's not like the US Title is doing much for Roode and even a short reign would give the fans something extra to cheer for. I don't get it, but that's WWE logic for you.

Roode poses but an RKO OUTTA NOWHERE takes him down. English and Rusev get one each as well. That wasn't a heel turn but rather Orton being Orton. Now just have Orton put one or two of them over and we might be

getting somewhere.

Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable have their own bulletin board and wonder how this is what they have to work with in the tag team division. These on-screen graphics during the promos need to die in a fire already.

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Ascension

Konnor wins an early slugout with Benjamin and Ascension clears the ring early on. A missed boot in the corner lets Gable start in on Konnor's knee though with a variety of leglocks keeping him in trouble. Konnor grabs a flapjack though and the hot tag brings in Viktor to start cleaning house. That includes a middle rope knee to Chad's face for two but Benjamin gets in a blind tag. Rolling Chaos Theory into the powerbomb/top rope clothesline puts Viktor away at 3:50.

Rating: D+. Just a quick win for Benjamin and Gable here to keep them hot, possibly for an upcoming match with the Bludgeon Brothers. Ascension was showing some fire here and that's a good thing, as it's not like they get a ton of ring time in the first place. Let them show what they can do and hopefully get another chance in the future.

New Day talks about who would be ranked highest if they were voted as individuals. This seems to go straight to Kofi, who wants the World Title this year. I could go for that.

Various wrestlers reacted to the Top Ten.

Sami wants his own moment on top of WWE.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

The winner gets AJ, on commentary, at Fastlane. They're tentative to start until Owens runs him over, only to charge into some armdrags. Some right hands send Owens to the floor and he tells Sami to calm down. Owens gets knocked off the apron and we take a break. Back with Sami in trouble but still being able to block the Cannonball.

The exploder suplex into the corner is countered so Sami settles for a tornado DDT and two instead. Sami gets shoved off the top but is still

able to get his knees up and block the Swanton. Kevin rolls to the floor and gets caught with a diving DDT to put both guys down on the outside.

Back in and a superkick sets up Owens' frog splash for two more and he can't believe the kickout. Sami is right back up with the Blue Thunder Bomb (which now has a chance to win as he got a pin out of it a few weeks back) for another near fall (ok maybe I'm overly optimistic). Owens stumbles out to the floor and it's time for the argument with AJ, who beats both guys up (though he hit Sami first) for the no contest at 14:02.

Rating: C+. These two have great chemistry together and it's very easy to have Sami slip back into face mode, even for one night only. He's a natural face who is playing a good heel and it makes for an easy dynamic against a natural heel like Owens. They had a good match here, even if the ending was obvious from before the opening bell.

Cue Bryan to say it's a triple threat at Fastlane, leaving AJ wanting a fight to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked this one about as much as I could have as it didn't really offer anything that bad and advanced enough stories. That being said, can we PLEASE get off this Shane vs. Bryan feud already? It feels like it's been going on for the better part of ever now and I'm no closer to wanting to boo Bryan, even if that's what WWE wants us to do. Not a great show, but it did its job well enough.

Results

Charlotte b. Liv Morgan – Figure Eight

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

Bobby Roode b. Rusev – Glorious DDT

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Ascension – Powerbomb/top rope combination to Viktor

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens went to a no contest when AJ Styles interfered

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Monday Night Raw – February 5, 2018: The Road To Reigning

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 5, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman, Corey Graves

We're less than a month away from Elimination Chamber and that means we need to fill in the Chambers. Three men have already qualified for their match and tonight we'll have another name added as Roman Reigns faces Bray Wyatt. Other than that we might get some more updates on John Cena's weird actions last week so let's get to it.

Bray Wyatt talks about his greatest victory taking place inside the Elimination Chamber. When he looks at Reigns, all he sees is a string of failures. Tonight, that string continues.

Reigns says the failures and successes are the marks of a great journey. He'll spear Wyatt in half and march on to Wrestlemania to take Suplex City apart. Ignore Reigns reading this off a card.

The announcers are back near the stage instead of at ringside like they were for most of last week.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

They trade headlocks to start until Reigns powers him into the corner. A charge misses though to give Bray two as Matt Hardy is watching in the back. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Reigns fights back and clotheslines him to the floor. The apron dropkick is broken up with a hard clothesline and Reigns is sent into the steps as we take a break. Back with Wyatt holding a reverse chinlock until Reigns grabs a Samoan drop.

Bray runs him over with the crossbody and takes Reigns to the corner. The superplex attempt is reversed into a powerbomb for two on Bray and Wyatt is in trouble. He's fine enough to counter the Superman Punch into a release Rock Bottom and the backsplash gets two. Reigns' spear is blocked and Sister Abigail gets two and it's time to just unload with right hands. Another Sister Abigail is blocked and the spear (which was a shove minus any significant contact) sends Reigns to the Chamber at 14:50.

Rating: C+. These two have solid chemistry but that was a bad ending. Reigns just shrugs everything off and mostly misses a spear for the pin. It's also REALLY hard to buy Reigns as being in jeopardy when you know full well what's coming at Wrestlemania. But let's just act like there's drama there and hope for the best right?

Post match Matt Hardy comes in and hits a Twist of Fate on Bray.

Seth Rollins is worried about Jason Jordan being too injured to help the team tonight.

Finn Balor vs. Dash Wilder

Hang on a second as Scott Dawson wants to make this a tag match if Balor wants to pick one of his buddies to be his partner. We've got a deal.

Finn Balor/Karl Anderson vs. Revival

Anderson and Wilder get things going with neither being able to get very far. Instead everything breaks down in a hurry and it's Revival being sent to the floor in a heap as we take an early break. Back with Dawson holding Finn in an armbar until Balor fights up without too much effort. Anderson gets the hot tag and cleans house, including a spinebuster for two on Dawson. It's back to Balor for the Sling Blade, followed by the shotgun dropkick on Dawson. The Coup de Grace is good for the pin on Scott at 8:10.

Rating: C. Perfectly fine match here and while I wouldn't have had the Revival lose (again), at least they're losing to wrestlers who can get something out of it and aren't in their 50s. That being said, it would be nice to see Revival either succeed or fail in back to back weeks for a change instead of getting my hopes up and wildly dashing them the next.

Sasha Banks is watching her match with Asuka from last week when Bayley comes in to say Sasha needs to stop torturing herself. Sasha wants to prove that she's still the Boss around here. Bayley brings up Sasha eliminating her from the Rumble and Sasha says she'd do it again in the Chamber. As usual, the scene was fine but the promos sounded terrible because they were reading off a script instead of being allowed to sound natural.

Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

205 Live GM Drake Maverick is on commentary. Nese shoves Ali around to start and it's off to Cedric in a hurry. Tony powers him down as well and it's off to Gulak for an ax handle to the ribs. Cedric is sat on the top rope and a hard clothesline from Gulak sends him down onto his shoulder.

A missed charge sends Nese into the corner and the hot tag brings in Ali for a high dropkick. The tornado DDT gets two on Gulak with Nese making the save. Cedric is right back up with a HUGE flip dive to take Nese down but Gulak rolls through Ali's high crossbody for two. A blind tag brings in Cedric and it's the springboard clothesline into the Lumbar Check to end Gulak at 4:18.

Rating: C-. The energy was good but, again, they're not exactly doing anything we haven't seen before. What they are doing though is putting the bigger matches on 205 Live and leaving this nothing match on Raw. That was a huge problem for months and hopefully this is a big step in fixing things.

Here's General Manager Kurt Angle to announce who will be joining Alexa Bliss in the Elimination Chamber. Challenging Bliss will be Bayley, Mandy Rose, Mickie James, Sonya Deville and Sasha Banks. You may notice the lack of Nia Jax, who will be facing Asuka at the pay per view. If Jax wins, she'll be added to the Women's Title match at Wrestlemania to make it a triple threat.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say this is unfair. She wants to know why there's a double standard going on. Why is she fighting in the Chamber while Brock Lesnar just has to face the winner? Alexa thinks it's sexist so Angle polls the audience on their opinion. The fans chant YES but Bliss walks out.

John Cena is ready to fight his way to Wrestlemania and winning a triple threat match tonight is the perfect way to get there.

Bayley vs. Asuka

Bayley grabs a hammerlock to start but her shoulder block just annoys Asuka. A slugout goes to Asuka and she takes Bayley down with ease. Asuka speeds things up but gets knocked off the top and out to the floor. Bayley slides out for a hurricanrana but a hip attack sends her into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Asuka elbowing her way to freedom but having another hip attack countered into a hard belly to back suplex for two. Asuka knees her in the head though and a hard kick to the back drops Bayley again. Now the hip attack connects again but Asuka misses a high crossbody. Bayley knees her in the head for two but Asuka grabs the Asuka Lock over the ropes.

That's broken up with a Stunner to send them outside but Bayley has to stop the YES Kicks back inside. The Bayley to Belly is countered and the Asuka Lock goes most of the way on. A rollup gives Bayley a VERY close

two (I bought it for a second) but the cross armbreaker makes Bayley tap at 11:14.

Rating: B. That's Bayley's best match in a long time because they played to her strengths: fighting from behind against a better opponent that she shouldn't be beating. She's good with hope spots, even if there's no reason to believe Asuka was going to lose. The drama helped and Bayley was working hard to get in a good match.

Post match Bayley shakes Asuka's hand.

Miz is here for his Elimination Chamber qualifying match and says his star has never been brighter. Two weeks ago, he defeated Roman Reigns to get the Intercontinental Title back and it was the highest rated show in four years. See, now that's the kind of heel logic we need to see more often. He's going to win the Chamber and move on to Wrestlemania where the reality show cameras will be rolling and his daughter will be born to see him win the Universal Title.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Joined in progress with Crews holding Miz in a delayed vertical suplex. We hit a pinfall reversal sequence for two each until Crews hits his Ultimate Warrior gorilla press drop. The standing moonsault hits knees though and Miz grabs a bodyscissors. Back up and Crews hits a sliding kick to the head to take over again, including catching the running corner clothesline. Now a standing moonsault into a standing shooting star combine for two on Miz but he crotches Crews on top. The Skull Crushing Finale sends Miz to the Chamber at 5:27.

Rating: C. I can't believe I'm saying this but Crews is getting better and better with the character work and a lot of that is due to Titus Worldwide. It's certainly not a strong gimmick or character but it's better than nothing and that's an upgrade at this point. If he can go somewhere off that, he could be a breakout star. For now though, just settle for good performances.

Jordan has hurt his neck and is out of the match tonight. Rollins needs a new partner so here's Roman Reigns to take the spot.

Tag Team Titles: Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins vs. The Bar

Rollins and Reigns are challenging. Sheamus shoulders Rollins down to start and it's quickly off to Cesaro. This goes a bit better for Rollins who knocks Cesaro into the corner, allowing the hot tag off to Reigns. It's time to start on Cesaro's arm and everything breaks down in a hurry.

Seth's suicide dive is countered into the Irish Curse and Reigns is sent into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Reigns in trouble in the corner as the Bar takes turns hammering him down. Sheamus is smart enough to knock Rollins off the apron but walks into a Superman Punch. Cue Jordan to help Rollins up to the apron so he can get the hot tag from Reigns. Everything breaks down and it's a Blockbuster to Cesaro, followed by a suicide dive to Sheamus.

Back in and the Sling Blade gets two on Cesaro as Rollins is on a roll. The suplex into the Falcon Arrow gets two more before Jordan trips Cesaro up. Reigns tells Jordan to get out as Cesaro eats the wind-up knee. Sheamus dives into a superkick but Cesaro breaks up the DoubleBomb. Jordan won't let the Bar leave though, eventually punching them both for the DQ at 13:33.

Rating: B-. I know we're still waiting on the heel turn from Jordan and I think this is about all we're going to get. Rollins and Reigns were rolling here but they were smart to not change the titles here. If Jordan's injury is as severe as it's rumored to be, I have no idea who Rollins is supposed to face going forward though. This tag stuff has run its course and he needs something better in the future, which Jordan wasn't going to be no matter how healthy he was.

We look at Braun Strowman destroying Kane last week.

Strowman is ready to hurt Cena and Elias.

Jordan and Rollins are still arguing when Angle comes in. Seth wishes he was the one who hurt Jordan but Kurt says that's too far. Jason tries to defend himself but Angle screams at him to go home and stay home until he's cleared.

Video on Nia Jax.

Nia Jax vs. Vanessa Floyd

A toss, a splash, a gorilla press drop and the big leg for the pin at 1:13.

Post match Nia says she doesn't fear Asuka and Asuka is going to be wearing the mask permanently. After Elimination Chamber, Asuka will be the empress of yesterday.

Sonya Deville vs. Mickie James

Sonya takes her down to start and drives Mickie into the corner, only to have James slug away with right hands. One of the shots might have broken Sonya's nose so Mickie adds some knees to the face, followed by a running kick to the chest for two. A hurricanrana out of the corner is broken up by a Mandy distraction and Sonya kicks away to keep her in trouble. Mickie grabs a very quick rollup out of nowhere for the pin at 3:37.

Rating: C-. They were hitting each other hard here and that made for an entertaining match. Mickie can certainly still go and was a heck of a hire for the division, meaning she'll be awesome in the Chamber as well. The Chamber should be a lot of fun and if they book it right could make for a heck of a fight. That being said, if they don't do things the right way (the lack of a monster is REALLY going to hurt things), it could be a mess.

Post match Absolution beats Mickie down until Bliss makes the save. That's a very smart move as Bliss continues to try and make an alliance because she knows she's done otherwise.

Next week: Finn Balor vs. Apollo Crews vs. Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy for the last Chamber spot.

Here's Elias to play for a bit, even though he hates small towns like this one. Normally he flies over it but tonight he's stuck here, just before he takes over all of WWE. He skipped performing at the Super Bowl Halftime Show to be here but this song is for him. The song is about how Strowman is just a man and after this it's on to Brock. Cue Cena to

interrupt though and we're ready to go.

John Cena vs. Braun Strowman vs. Elias

The winner gets to enter the Chamber in the six spot. That's quite unfair as the two who qualified tonight don't have a chance to get in. Why? Just because they weren't booked last week? What bias. Elias bails to the floor to start so Strowman kicks Cena in the face as we take an early break.

Back with Strowman chasing Elias around the ring, only to get caught in an AA. Well an AA attempt at least as Cena collapses under the weight. Elias is clotheslined out to the floor but some double teaming keeps Strowman in trouble. A double clothesline puts Strowman on the floor and a pair of whips into the post keep him down.

The guitar over the back into the AA onto the steps have Strowman knocked silly but Elias uses the rest of the guitar on Cena. A backbreaker gives Elias two on Cena but he comes back with the finishing sequence. The Shuffle doesn't work though as Braun is back in with the running powerslam on Cena. Elias escapes one of his own and sends Strowman to the floor before stealing the pin on Cena at 9:58.

Rating: D+. This was much shorter than I was expecting and while the surprise ending does help, I needed a little more than this one. Strowman as the unstoppable monster was a good idea, but it would help a bit if he wasn't just there as the big guy to be vanquished by Reigns.

Post match Strowman powerslams both guys multiple times to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked this show more than I would have expected, which might have been aided by the nine matches in three hours. They advanced a bunch of stuff for the Chamber and that's only going to help with two shows left to go. Hopefully things continue to move forward next week so we can start the proper build towards Wrestlemania. Good show this week.

Results

Roman Reigns b. Bray Wyatt – Spear

Finn Balor/Karl Anderson b. Revival – Coup de Grace to Dawson

Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak – Lumbar Check to Gulak

Asuka b. Bayley – Cross armbreaker

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

The Bar b. Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns via DQ when Jason Jordan interfered

Nia Jax b. Vanessa Floyd – Legdrop

Mickie James b. Sonya Deville – Rollup

Elias b. John Cena and Braun Strowman – Running powerslam to Cena

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Monday Night Raw – January 16, 2006: Cracking Open A

Time Capsule

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 16, 2006

Location: RBC Arena, Raleigh, North Carolina

Attendance: 7,500

Commentators: Joey Styles, Jerry Lawler, Jonathan Coachman

Another request and this time around it's for a pretty simple reason. I'm not sure the match was announced in advance so we'll save that for later, but it's one of those matches that you hear and say either "well of course he did" or you're so confused that you don't know which way to go next. Let's get to it.

I've already done the show before this one, which you can see here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/07/26/monday-night-raw-january-9-2006-live-sex-celebration/>

It's the Martin Luther King Jr. Day show and you know Vince is going to make sure to cover that one. That's still cool yet kind of surprising at the same time.

Opening sequence.

The match was indeed known in advance: Edge vs. Ric Flair for the WWE Championship in a Tables, Ladders and Chairs match. I mean....what?

We look at Kurt Angle moving to Smackdown to become the new World Heavyweight Champion (due to Batista tearing his tricep and being put on the shelf for about six months). He's facing Shawn Michaels tonight because this is a heck of a stacked show.

Here are Edge and Lita (just....yeah) to open things up. People have been saying Edge stole his title from Cena at New Year's Revolution but he won it fair and square. He's absolutely right actually. That's how Money in the Bank works and now he's the WWE Champion. Edge calls the shots and now he gets to call the shots, which included a live sex celebration last week. Apparently that offended some people and that's just too bad.

The end of last week's show was the highest rated ending to Raw in two years (erg) and the day after he won the title, over 25 million people were on WWE.com (I repeat my previous erg. Wrestlers shouldn't care about that stuff.). That makes him the most watched WWE Champion of all time. That makes quite the assumption. I might have been on there playing Out Think the Fink.

As for the people who didn't like it, we see a clip of Ric Flair taking a Conchairto for interfering last week. Later tonight he's going to finish Flair off in a TLC match but for right now, he wants live, uninterrupted sex with Lita right here. Obviously he's not a Rocky fan because WOMEN WEAKEN LEGS. A chair is brought in and Lita removes Edge's shirt before climbing on top of him.

Cue Kurt Angle with manager Daivari (King: "Can't we just have some live sex?") for the YOU SUCK chants with Angle saying were directed at Lita. Angle says tricks like this make him a joke while people like him know he's the real thing. Edge says it made him smart and a challenge is made for a title unification match. That's not happening because Edge isn't lowering himself to fight Angle.

That means a release German suplex but here's Vince McMahon to interrupt. He wants the two scheduled matches to take place tonight so Edge needs to go get ready. Vince: "And cover yourself up!" As for Angle, he'll be facing Shawn tonight, but it's a non-title match. Instead, Shawn is fighting for his contract and is gone if he loses. Long segment here but Edge is relishing this role and nailing it so far. Throw in Wrestling Machine Kurt Angle and Lita at perhaps her hottest ever and this was awesome on a variety of levels.

Shawn Michaels vs. Kurt Angle

Non-title but Shawn's job is on the line. Shawn stares at Vince on the way to the ring because that's one of the top stories of 2006. Joined in progress after a break with Shawn chasing Daivari around the ring before heading back inside for a headlock on the mat. Angle fights up and stomps away in the corner, only to get the skin chopped off of his chest. That doesn't seem to both Angle though, who comes out with an overhead belly

to belly. A hard German suplex gives Kurt two and we hit a bodyscissors.

Back up and Shawn chops him again but gets sent hard into the corner. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT for two but Daivari low bridges Shawn to the floor. That earns Daivari a superkick, only to have Angle hit the Angle Slam on the floor as we take a break. Back with Angle having a belly to belly superplex broken up but running the corner to hit the super Angle Slam for two instead. A desperation Sweet Chin Music is countered into the ankle lock which Shawn reverses into a small package for two of his own.

The forearm into the nip up just earns Shawn another ankle lock but this one is kicked off in short order. Angle gets knocked down to set up a weird looking missed top rope elbow. The ankle lock goes on again and Shawn flails, eventually hitting Daivari as a bonus. Angle gets the grapevine but Daivari brings in a chair and Kurt lets go for some reason. As you might expect, Daivari swings the chair and this Angle, knocking him into a rollup to give Shawn the pin.

Rating: B. These two have very solid chemistry and make their matches look easy. The ending was a little bit messy but at least it keeps the new champion from losing clean. I mean, they could have had it be a countout or something but why do that when you can have him get pinned? Still though, very entertaining match here and that's all you would have expected.

Angle yells at Daivari....who slaps him in the face. An Angle Slam over the top has Daivari looking rather dead.

During the break, Angle dumps Daivari.

Maria Kanellis, still the incredibly annoying and ditzy interviewer (that's not a bad thing), shows Chris Masters Carlito turning on him at New Year's Revolution. Masters blames Carlito for the loss and promises to win the Royal Rumble. Oh and tonight, John Cena is losing the Master Lock Challenge.

Ashley Massaro (never got the appeal and she was terrible in the ring) is worried about the six woman tag tonight but Trish Stratus tells her to

calm down. The crazy lesbian stalker Mickie James (their partner tonight) comes in and apologizes for attacking Ashley last week. Psycho Mickie worked so well.

It's time for the Masterlock Challenge. Masters introduces Cena as the former WWE Champion and we're ready to go. We get a rare very pro-Cena chant as he sits down in the chair but Cena grabs the arm before the hold can go on. The hold goes on a few seconds later and Cena tries a variety of escapes to no avail. Cena fights up again and almost breaks it but here's Edge for a belt shot to the head.

Shawn is having his ankle looked at when Vince comes in. Vince tells him to get out of the building before moving over to Ric Flair, on the trainer's mat next to him. Last week Ric interrupted Vince's celebration and tonight, Flair can make the magic happen one more time. Vince's mistress Candice Michelle comes in and asks Vince to critique her match. She does her stupid dance and even Flair is giving this a look to say it's the dumbest thing he's ever seen.

Candice Michelle/Torrie Wilson/Victoria vs. Trish Stratus/Mickie James/Ashley

If there is ANY justice in the world, this will be all Trish/Mickie/Victoria. Torrie has her dog with her and Victoria is in her weird short/curlier hair phase (not a bad look, just very different than her usual one). But hang on: before the match we need a behind the scenes look at Candice Michelle's GoDaddy commercial. In other words, it's her in a white tank top washing windows. To be fair, they're not trying to hide what they're going for here and she makes jokes about the whole thing.

Victoria cranks on Trish's arm to start (thank goodness) until a rollup gives Trish two. A headscissors out of the corner looks to set up Stratusfaction but Candice comes in, meaning Trish has to headscissor her down as well (with Trish's tights going rather far down in the process). Ashley gets the hot tag, much to Mickie's annoyance. She's so annoyed that she spears Ashley down, setting up the Widow's Peak for the pin.

As usual, it's SO weird anymore to see the women as nothing but eye candy

with the wrestling being a detail to look at them in their revealing outfits. Total mess of course but at least they had the right wrestlers in there for the most part. To tell you what Torrie meant here, she held the dog while standing on the apron.

Rob Van Dam is back in the Royal Rumble after missing a year of action due to a torn ACL.

Carlito takes credit for keeping Van Dam on the injured list even longer. The fans chant for RVD but Carlito doesn't want to hear it because he's going to win the Royal Rumble. No one on Raw or Smackdown can throw him over the top, and that's cool. Kane, over the top, next segment.

A production guy tells Vince that a woman wants to see him. Vince thinks it's Candice and says make her wait a minute.

Post break Vince is ready for her and starts stripping but instead it's....Mama Benjamin (a rather large woman played by a comedienne who managed her son Shelton Benjamin), who throws money at him. She wants to know why Shelton isn't wrestling tonight while Shelton looks like he wants to die. Vince agrees to give him a match and Mama tells him to go get ready. Shelton leaves and Mama tells Vince to call her when he wants some chocolate thunder. Vince shivers as she leaves.

Royal Rumble rundown. All two matches announced so far.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Big Show

Show has a broken hand. Mama Benjamin is terrified (Shelton: "He just tall. That's all Mama.") and Show backs both of them into the corner. To his credit, Show opens the ropes for her (Mama: "You do the best you can son.") and we're ready to go. Show drops him without much effort but hurts the hand again. Shelton is smart enough to send the hand into the post and hits it again to break up the chokeslam. A fall away slam sends Shelton outside but here's HHH (who broke Show's hand) for a distraction, resulting in a countout win for Shelton.

Raw World Title: Edge vs. Ric Flair

Edge is defending in a TLC match, the first ever singles version. Flair's

Intercontinental Title isn't on the line. Ric goes over to hug his 19 year old daughter Ashley, better known as Charlotte. Lita has changed tops, likely for the sake of the censors, but the Edge tank top works perfectly well too. Oh and Flair has a concussion thanks to Edge, just in case there weren't enough details coming into this.

Flair chops away in the corner to start but Edge decks him in the jaw to take over. It's already time for the first ladder, which goes into Flair's head but actually doesn't draw blood. Edge puts him inside the ladder and crushes it with a chair, which somehow doesn't kill Flair. They head outside with Edge being chopped into the crowd but Flair follows him out instead of, you know, going to win the title.

Back to ringside with Edge suplexing Flair on the floor. Lita starts getting the chairs ready as Edge puts Flair on a table. The Conchairto is broken up by a testicular claw and Edge is tossed into the barricade. Lita gets slammed down as well but Edge gets in a chair shot to finally bust Flair open. It almost makes me feel better to have it happen instead of waiting on it for so long.

Edge heads back in and hits a HUGE splash to put Flair through the table on the floor. There is blood everywhere and Flair's family is panicking as we take a break. Back with Flair having a 1980s level of blood but still being able to put Edge inside a ladder for some chair shots. Flair cracks him with another chair shot and then just shoves a ladder onto him. A few shots to the ankle have Flair loading up the ladder but he moves it to the corner instead.

Flair goes up and of course gets superplexed back down for a double knockdown. Edge hits him low but misses a missile dropkick off the ladder. He's fine enough to chair Flair in the head though and it's time to climb. Somehow Ric is up and turns the ladder over, sending Edge through a table at ringside in a HUGE crash. Lita breaks up the climb though, which just makes me want to see Lita vs. Charlotte. That earns Lita a Figure Four as Edge is still down. Flair's ultra slow climb lets Edge get up though and the slug it out on top of the ladder. Naturally Edge gets the better of it and retains the title.

Rating: C+. I never feel right watching Flair in something like this. The guy is nearly sixty and putting his body through something like this with all the blood and violence when he's more than capable of having a good regular match. I get the idea behind it (if nothing else just saying "Flair in a TLC match" is a draw) but I wish they could come up with something better than this. It's an entertaining match, but not something I'm comfortable watching.

Post match Edge spears him down and loads up the Conchairto, only to have Cena come in for the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This show is such a time capsule as you have Cena being the super face, the women being worthless in the ring yet oozing sex appeal in something that's not around nearly as strong today (which isn't a bad thing), throwing a TLC match and Shawn vs. Angle on free TV and acting like Carlito and Chris Masters could ever have any kind of main event value. The show was fun, but it really isn't something I'd want to watch week to week. It feels like it would get very grating in short order, but for a one off it was rather fun.

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Main Event – February 1, 2018: On the Road Again

Main Event

Date: January 31, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

We're FINALLY getting out of Philadelphia with the seventh TV show from the same arena in less than a week. That's just staggering when you think about it but somehow WWE puts out that much material at once, even if you consider that one of them is Mixed Match Challenge. You know, if you're one of the small number of people who actually watch the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Bayley vs. Sonya Deville

The rest of Absolution is here so Graves gets to swoon over Mandy. Sonya takes her to the mat to start and wraps her up with a bodyscissors. An easy takedown keeps Bayley in trouble before Sonya punches her in the face a few times. Well she's certainly well rounded. Bayley snapmares her down though and hits a running basement clothesline for two.

Back up and Sonya unloads on her with right hands in the corner before it's back to the bodyscissors. That's enough for Bayley who takes her down and hammers away, knocking Sonya to the floor in the process. Bayley even shoves Mandy down, followed by a quick rollup to end Sonya at 5:06.

Rating: C. They made Sonya look like a killer here until the more experienced Bayley caught her in the end. That's a great way to make Sonya feel like a bit deal but for some reason they did it here on Main Event instead of somewhere that actually matters. Hopefully they both get some more time on the big shows soon as they could both benefit from such a thing.

Video on Ronda Rousey's debut.

From Raw.

Asuka vs. Sasha Banks

Banks slaps her in the face to start and takes Asuka into the corner for a ram into the buckle. That just earns her a kick to the head and a hip attack to put Sasha on the floor. Back in and some kicks to the legs set up the armbar to keep Sasha in trouble. Banks fights up with a kick to the face and running double knees as we take a break.

We come back with Asuka in trouble after the double knees in the corner, followed by the double arm crank. A headscissors into a very fast Bank Statement is countered into a rollup for two. Sasha gets it right back on but Asuka rolls out again before being sent outside. Banks' dive is blocked with a kick to the face for a SCARY crash to the floor.

Back in and Asuka unloads with a knee to the face and some HARD strikes to the head. The hip attack in the corner sets up a missile dropkick for two so it's off to the cross armbreaker. Banks reverses that as well and Asuka's running hip attack misses, sending her outside in a heap. Banks follows with the knees off the apron (nearly crushing Asuka's head in the process) and more of them off the top for a close two. The Bank Statement goes on again but Sasha tries to move it back to the middle, allowing Asuka to reverse into the Asuka Lock for the tap at 14:28.

Rating: B+. This was in the "beat the heck out of each other" school of wrestling with Sasha's knees hitting Asuka over and over while Asuka just survived the whole thing and caught Banks at the end. That's the biggest win Asuka has had yet in WWE and if she can beat Charlotte, whoever finally beats Asuka is going to look like the biggest conqueror ever. Excellent match here and a lot of fun, especially after how big last night was.

From Raw again.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is defending and gets punched in the face to start as the beating is

on in a hurry. For some reason Miz tries a chop and is suddenly the Ric Flair to Reigns' Sting. The champ gets knocked outside for a whip into the steps as the one sided beating continues. Reigns grabs a chair to chase the Miztourage off but Miz posts him to take over as we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and grabbing a Samoan drop. Glad to see some things never change. Miz actually wins a bit of a slugout until Reigns hits the corner clotheslines and a big boot to take over again. The YES Kicks have Reigns in trouble and a chop block puts him down.

We hit the Figure Four for a good while until Reigns turns it over, sending Miz to the ropes. Reigns' lifting sitout powerbomb gets two so Miz goes to the turnbuckle like last week. That's intercepted though and Miz pokes Reigns in the eye so the Skull Crushing Finale can get two. The Superman Punch gets the same but here's the Miztourage to interfere again. That earns them a Superman Punch and a spear but Miz grabs a rollup to retain at 18:07.

Rating: B-. These two have some good chemistry together, which is rather surprising given both of their reputations. Miz retaining is the right call here as it seems like they're setting up Reigns on the comeback trail. You know, because we're supposed to buy that Reigns is someone who faces adversity and wasn't anointed as the chosen one several years back.

Lince Dorado/Gran Metalik/Kalisto vs. Jack Gallagher/TJP/Ariya Daivari

This would be the third time we've seen the masked guys against some combination of villains, all of which have included TJP, in less than ten days. Dorado wastes no time in hurricanranaing Gallagher down, setting up a standing moonsault for two. Back up and Jack does his handstand in the corner but get sent outside for his efforts. Kalisto comes in and takes Jack down from the apron, only to have TJP take Kalisto out, sending him throat first onto the ropes.

Back from a break with Metalik walking the ropes into the dropkick on TJP. The Metalik Driver gets two on TJP with Gallagher making the save. Everything breaks down and Dorado's double handspring Stunner drops

Daivari and TJP. Kalisto moonsaults onto Gallagher, leaving Metalik to charge into TJP's boots in the corner. Daivari tags himself in though and TJP isn't happy. A pair of kicks to the head lets Metalik drop the elbow on Daivari for the pin at 7:27.

Rating: D+. Not bad but absolutely nothing we haven't seen before. I'm getting tired of seeing these guys fight but for some reason that's all we're getting over and over again. Let the masked guys go after the regular Tag Team Titles or something, as there's always room for a lucha team on the main roster. But no, the obvious solution is to have them fight (and beat) some combination of five guys over and over while never advancing anywhere.

Quick look at the men's Royal Rumble.

From Smackdown.

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens

AJ wastes no time in headscissoring Owens into the corner so it's off to Sami to work on Nakamura's arm. Styles comes back in for a few kicks before Nakamura is back in, only to be taken into the corner for the double stomping. Nakamura fights back with some shots to the head and we hit the front facelock. Sami gets thrown outside but Owens uses the distraction to shoulder Nakamura down.

That leaves Sami down on the floor so Owens yells at him, meaning it's time for the big argument. That's too much for Sami and he takes the walk up the ramp as we go to a break. Back with Owens holding Styles in a chinlock as Sami watches from the stage. AJ's belly to back facebuster gets two as Sami runs back in for the save. Sami comes in for two off a backdrop and it's quickly back to Owens for two off the backsplash. Owens chops Sami for a tag but that's not cool with Zayn, who does the same to bring Owens right back in.

They get knocked into each other so Sami leaves again, leaving Kevin to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. A Vader Bomb elbow gets two but the Pop Up Powerbomb is thwarted. Instead it's off to Nakamura for some kicks, only to have Owens bail before Kinshasa. AJ throws him right back in

though and it's a spinwheel kick to the head, followed by Kinshasa to give Nakamura the pin at 15:25.

Rating: C+. Pretty standard main event tag match here but it advanced the story of Sami vs. Kevin's issues. AJ vs. Nakamura has a lot of time to build up and there's no need to rush things. Let that take its time to be properly built and see where they can go instead of rushing through things and running out of steam with a month to go before Wrestlemania.

And from Raw again.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Finn Balor vs. John Cena

Balor has Anderson and Gallows in his corner. The fans are behind Balor of course as he takes Cena down into an armbar. Balor does it again but Cena takes him down with two straight headlocks. Cena gets sent outside and points at a fan as we hit a test of strength. The fans are looking at something else, which is initially booed and then cheered. The camera cuts to the side as Cena looks into the crowd to see what's going on. Cena punches Balor down and we take a break with Cena looking at the crowd again.

Back with Cena tossing Balor into the corner a few times but stopping to look at the crowd. The announcers say the fans are getting to him, which is a weird way to go with Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but the Shuffle takes WAY too long, allowing Balor to move. Balor gets two off an Eye of the Hurricane and scores with the Pele.

The Sling Blade sets up the shotgun dropkick but Cena is right there with a clothesline to take him down. Cena grabs the AA for two and goes to the apron....where he tells Coach that he's just trying to go to Wrestlemania. He takes way too long to go up top and Balor kicks him down, setting up the shotgun dropkick. The Coup de Grace misses and Balor bangs up his knee. We hit one of the worst looking STF's Cena has ever put on but Balor makes the rope. Balor takes too long going up and it's the Super AA for the pin at 17:48.

Rating: C+. Weird crowd and weird Cena aside, this was only pretty good. The problem is both guys should be in the Chamber and Cena is likely

getting the Undertaker match (erg) so I'm not sure why they needed to have Cena beat Balor here. That being said, I'm more confused about the whole crowd thing. Is that Cena's latest crisis of confidence as we head to New Orleans? It seems like he has one every other year. Oh and Balor wasn't buried. He lost, but that's a far cry from being buried.

Overall Rating: C. Not a bad show here as we highlight all the happenings this past week in WWE. It was a big time and it's nice to see the important stuff getting the attention it deserves. We're getting closer to Wrestlemania and that means each week gets more and more important. Hopefully things continue at this pace and even better as we head further down the road.

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