

Monday Night Raw – March 3, 2003: We'll Get There One Way Or Another

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 3, 2003

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the week after Rock showed why he's one of the best of all time and now it's time for a showdown with Steve Austin. While Steve might not be the star he once was, those two around Wrestlemania time never gets old. On top of that, we'll get an update on HHH vs. Booker T. at the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with Bischoff in the back with Rico and 3 Minute Warning. They're instructed to keep Austin out of the building tonight. Why do the evil authority figures hire such lame help?

Here's Booker T. to get things going. Last week he won the battle royal to go to Wrestlemania but here are Flair HHH to interrupt before he can get a minute in. HHH thinks Booker is a bit confused. Yeah Booker is going to Wrestlemania, but someone "like you" doesn't get to be a World Champion. That's reserved for people like HHH because Booker is here to entertain instead of compete. HHH asks for a little dance because people like Booker, "with your nappy hair and your SUCKAS" are very good at entertaining. The idea of Booker challenging HHH for the title makes the champ laugh.

Yeah Booker was a five time WCW World Champion but that title is a joke. That was back during the time when David Arquette and Vince Russo were World Champion, meaning Booker championipped that place right into the ground. Booker wants to go to Wrestlemania to face the best in the world and he'll do what people like him always do: lose. Booker finally gets to talk and says somebody like him is going to take that title at Wrestlemania. HHH: "Well good luck brother." HHH reminds Booker that he

has Scott Steiner tonight and would be surprised if Booker makes it to Wrestlemania.

Allow me to pause and say WOW. I remember watching this back in the day and feeling uncomfortable with it, but this is mind blowing stuff now. I mean....HHH just basically said a black man can't win the title. Yeah later on they would change it to HHH meaning an ex-convict, but there is NO spinning what he was going with here. It was flat out "Booker, you're black" without actually saying it and I can't believe they didn't bail on it by the end of the show.

Jeff Hardy vs. Christian

Fallout from Jeff's failed save attempt last week. Jeff jumps him to start and hammers away in the corner before jumping to the floor and pulling Christian face first onto the apron. A top rope dive puts Christian down again as Lawler talks about Hardy being frustrated lately. What appears to be a moonsault is broken up as Hardy gets crotched on top for two and the fans go mild. We hit the abdominal stretch as JR gets in a Wilbur Snyder reference. That goes as far as most abdominal stretches go so Jeff comes back with the Whisper in the Wind for two. The Twist misses though and the Unprettier is good for the pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad but these two know each other so well that they can have a passable match in their sleep. They were pushing Hardy's impending heel turn which was an interesting way to go with him, but the fans weren't quite ready to boo him yet. Christian was starting to rise up the card at this point, which is a good sign as the tag teams were long past done.

In case Austin gets past 3 Minute Warning, Lance Storm is ready for him next.

Chief Morely vs. Spike Dudley

This is the perk of having a minion like Spike around. If he wins here, the Dudleys are unsuspected. Spike jumps him to start and stomps away in the corner, but amazingly enough a guy the size of a Diva with some meat on her bones isn't enough to stop Morely. The Dudley Dog is countered

into a kind of powerbomb for two before stomping away with some force in the corner. See Spike, that's how it's done. A suplex and the Money Shot end Spike in a hurry.

Eric wants Christian and Jericho to help guard him against Austin. Why don't evil bosses ever SEND ALL THE LACKEYS AT ONCE? If there was even an evil guy with a brain, the villains would win every time.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Jazz/Victoria

The heels argue over who starts and Trish bulldogs both of them down at once. Jackie and Jazz get things going but Victoria offers a trip, allowing Jazz to take over with a dropkick. A sitout powerslam gets two for Jazz but Victoria kicks Jazz by mistake. Again, GET SMARTER VILLAINS. Victoria comes in for two off a snap suplex but Jackie slips out of a slam and tags in Trish. Everything breaks down and Victoria breaks up the Stratusphere, only to get rolled up for the pin a few seconds later.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but they set up the Wrestlemania title match well enough. Trish was really starting to figure out how to be the superhero of the division but it's really distracting with King freaking out that her top is so low cut. Victoria was awesome at this point too and I really want them to just get to the showdown between Victoria and Trish and cut out Jazz and Jackie.

Morely is going to help Storm against Austin.

Coach knocks on Rock's door (why did it take this long to get to Rock? Why is anyone else on this show?) for an interview. First words from Rock: "Coach, are you on crack?" Rock thinks they might be able to do this Wednesday and sends Coach off with instructions to wash up. The camera follows Rock into his dressing room and sees him get annoyed as the fans boo. He looks for his guitar to soothe his soul but finds Hurricane instead.

After being confused for a second after FINDING HURRICANE SITTING IN HIS LOCKER, Rock asks the obvious question: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THERE??? Hurricane might have seen him walking around without any clothes on. Rock brings up eliminating Hurricane last week and asks about Ronald

McDonald and pals. Apparently Rock was screaming something in Hurricane's ear last week, but Hurricane only heard Rock screaming when Booker threw him out.

That's just a mistake though because Rock tripped. Fans: "BOO!" Rock: "THE ROCK SAID THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED!!!" Rock goes into a rant about how Hurricane is nothing but his phone goes off in his pocket. Rock: "Excuse the Rock one second. Oh hey buddy." After hanging up: "It's nothing! He says he knows you!" Rock gets even better when he sees that Hurricane has braces. Is he going to go sell band candy after the show? Last week, Rock was saying his lines from Scorpion King, which was in I think Arabic.

Rock asks if Hurricane knows what the line means. Hurricane: "If it's what I saw from behind that curtain, it means that the Scorpion King has a tiny ding-a-ling." Rock: "WHAT????? AND STOP LAUGHING!!!" We finally get to the point of this: Hurricane thinks Rock is scared of Austin and has had Bischoff sending the goons after him. Hurricane leaves and Rock tells his crotch that it's the king.

Sweet merciful goodness the Rock is on fire right now, but there's one thing more important than all others here: he's having these segments with Hurricane. Not HHH, not Austin, not Undertaker and not Hogan. He's doing this with someone who has never gotten a break and is just kind of there.

Rock isn't losing a thing with these segments and is going to have the real main event at Wrestlemania XIX. In other words, he's giving someone a rub because it's not going to hurt him and we get an entertaining segment as a result. Why can't more big names do that? Ah yes, because they're too busy telling their World Title opponents to dance.

Here's Chris Jericho for a match with Test, but of course he has something to say. Jericho wants to apologize to Stacy for hitting her in the face with a steel chair a few weeks ago, but he'd rather apologize for her hooking up with a lying cheater like Test. Jericho shows us a clip of Test signing a girl's chest, which leads to Stacy freaking out. Of course this leads to a plug for the Girls Gone Wild pay per view, but Test charges the ring as Jericho thinks it's going to be a countout.

Test vs. Chris Jericho

Test goes right for him as Christian follows Stacy out to the ring. That earns Christian a clothesline from Test and a toss over the barricade for some Canadian violence. Back in and a tilt-a-whirl slam plants Chris as this is all Test so far. Since he's Test though, Jericho quickly counters into a Walls attempt but Test kicks him off. A quick powerbomb drops Jericho but he distracts the referee so Christian can come in with a cheap shot to Test for two. Test plants Jericho with a full nelson slam but has to kick Christian off the apron, allowing Jericho to hit him low and hit the Breakdown (Skull Crushing Finale) for the pin.

Rating: D. This seems like the blowoff to the singles feud as Test either needs to get a partner or they need to split something off into another singles feud. Jericho and Christian were a good team but this was an awkward time for Jericho as he was main eventing Wrestlemania last year but a year later he's in a midcard tag team.

Post match Jericho and Christian give Test a Conchairto to really knock him out of the story but Shawn Michaels comes out to save Stacy. That earns him a chair to the face as Jericho means business. We actually get some blood to really make the Wrestlemania match clear. Jericho makes it even clearer by holding up the chair but says he wants to end Shawn's career at Wrestlemania.

Goldust arrives (an hour and ten minutes into the show) and freaks out 3 Minute Warning.

Christopher Nowitski wants to help fight Austin but gets a surprise 3D for his efforts.

Scott Steiner vs. Booker T.

They slug it out to start with Steiner getting the better of it until Booker nails the flying forearm. He's still no Tito Santana. The ax kick misses so Steiner nails the Namesake Line and a belly to belly. It seems that Steiner has morphed into a heel in the span of a week. The elbow into the push-ups gets two but Booker comes back with a running elbow.

The side kick out of the corner looks to set up the Spinarooni but Steiner plows over him because Booker is kneeling in the middle of the ring with his back to his opponent. Cue HHH and Flair as Steiner is bleeding from the eye. That goes nowhere so Booker botches the sunset flip out of the corner for the pin.

Rating: D. My goodness how did Steiner convince anyone to keep him around after those HHH matches and then this one? They've managed to make Booker look horrible because he can't carry Steiner (who could at this point?), after making him look like a fool because HHH is doing a racism angle for reasons I still don't comprehend.

Rock is singing about how a big star like him has to deal with being in Long Island when Bischoff comes in. That's not cool with the Rock as he yells at Bischoff for sending all the goons to stop Austin. If there's anything left of Austin, Bischoff can make some rattlesnake dip out of him, but Rock will walk back to Smackdown if anyone goes after Austin.

Al Snow/Tommy Dreamer vs. Rob Van Dam/Kane

Hardcore of course. It's a brawl on the floor to start until Rob slides in and dives out onto Snow. Dreamer brings in the first cane because he doesn't know how to wrestle a regular match. It's Kane coming off the top this time with the flying clothesline to knock Dreamer silly, only to have the ECW guys come back with trashcan shots. This goes as well as you would expect as Kane chokeslams both guys down, setting up a Five Star to pin Dreamer in a short match. Apparently this was punishment from Morely. It's punishment to face a couple of lower card guys?

Austin fails to run over all the lackeys with his truck so Bischoff yells at them. That's a surprising result.

Here's Austin in the arena for a pretty weak reaction. The interest just wasn't there at this point. He isn't sure what to talk about first, but before he gets into anything else he needs to thank the fans for sticking with him after he left. Then he got tired of sitting at the house and now he's back and ready to beat up anyone in that locker room. This brings Hollywood Rock out to the stage, complete with an open bottle of water.

Rock is glad to see him back but gives Austin some advice: as soon as you become successful, these people will turn on you. Rock isn't here to talk to the people though because he has something to say to Austin. There's one thing Rock needs to do in his career and that's beat Austin at Wrestlemania. How about it? It one corner the baddest man in wrestling, the man who revolutionized Monday night and the biggest star in this industry. Then in the other corner, Steve Austin.

Before he can answer though, here's Bischoff to offer make Rock vs. Booker T. next week. If Rock wins, he can have his choice of Austin or HHH at Wrestlemania. HUH? Why in the world are we talking about HHH now? Booker vs. HHH is set and Austin vs. Rock III needs to happen. Instead, here's 3 Minute Warning to get beaten down as you would expect them to. Austin turns around and sees Rock face to face. Rock teases leaving but comes up swinging, only to run away from an attempted Stunner to end the show. That's it?

Overall Rating: D+. What the heck was that ending? We've spent all night setting up Rock and Austin's showdown and get a culmination of the Bischoff stuff which was already blown off back at No Way Out? This was a mess all around though as the build isn't working for the most part. We're getting to the big matches, but HHH has already cut Booker's legs off and now they're postponing the announcement of Rock vs. Austin for another week for no adequate reason. The wrestling was mostly horrible here but that's nothing out of the ordinary.

If nothing else though, it's amazing how much easier these shows are to sit through than the three hour versions. No these aren't great episodes, but they don't have time to drive you crazy or to wear me out. I can live with short matches and some questionable endings as long as the show just doesn't drone on and on. This show would be fine if they just let Austin and Rock talk all night, but Booker needs to get something back on HHH next week after that mess to open the show.

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Lucha Underground – April 8, 2015: That's Not Good

Lucha Underground

Date: April 8, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

The tournament continues tonight as we try to find the first Trios Tag Team Champions. I get the idea behind doing this instead of having a regular set of Tag Team Titles but it's not really winning me over just yet. If nothing else, it doesn't help that the matches usually break down into insanity too quickly, though that can be said about a lot of things on this show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's tournament match and Prince Puma successfully defending his title against Cage.

Konnor and Puma are in Cuerno's office. The boss wants Puma in the tournament to make it mean more, so he needs to get some partners because next week he's facing King Cuerno and two partners who will be ringside tonight for Cuerno's title shot.

Trios Tag Team Titles Tournament First Round: Son of Havok/Ivelisse/Angelico vs. Aero Star/Fenix/Drago

Well that's different. Fenix and Angelico slap hands to start but Fenix counters a monkey flip with a double stomp to the back to take over early. Off to Ivelisse who gets thrown into Angelico, only to have him

flip her over to the apron and come in instead. Fenix kicks Angelico in the face and it's off to Drago for a DDT as Vampiro goes into fanboy mode. Now we get to the problems as Fenix goes to the middle rope and Star climbs onto his shoulders for an elbow, but Drago wants the pin.

Off to Havok vs. Star with the fans behind the former as he gets two off a standing shooting star press. Ivelisse comes in off a slap but Angelico tags himself in and gets spun around by Star, allowing Drago to come in for a tornado DDT. Angelico is sent to the floor so Fenix can launch Drago onto him, but Fenix's corkscrew dive hits his partner by mistake. Back in and Ivelisse hits a running DDT (Think Dolph Ziggler) to stun Fenix before Havok hits a flip dive on Drago.

Fenix dives on everyone so Ivelisse dives on everyone not named Fenix (he only got a rope kicked between his legs). Fenix walks the ropes to drop an elbow on Angelico, leaving Drago to kick Havok back inside. That's fine with Havok as he springboards off the ropes into a double back elbow to Drago and Star. Ivelisse short arms Havok on a tag attempt and walks out, so Havok kicks Drago in the head and hits the shooting star to advance to the finals.

Rating: B-. This fits into the category of a match that isn't really good from a quality standpoint but man alive was it fun. They were flying all over the place and hitting dive after dive, which is all you need for something like this. It doesn't hurt that Ivelisse looks great and can back it up in the ring. Fun stuff here.

Konnan has found Puma a partner with Hernandez. Johnny Mundo pops up and says Puma already asked him to be his partner because he wants a piece of Cuerno. Konnan isn't pleased.

Sexy Star vs. Super Fly

This is mask vs. mask, which really should be a bigger deal than it is here. Cueto set this up because Star saved Fly from having his arm broken and Cueto is kind of a jerk. Star works on a wristlock to start before they fight over a top wristlock. They hit the mat and come up in a standoff before Fly just pops her in the face to take over. Back up and Star kicks him in the ribs and nails an X-Factor (modified version of an

old Konnan sequence) but Fly slaps her in the face again.

A middle rope hurricanrana drops Fly to the floor and Star hits a big dive for good measure. Striker is doing play by play a mile a minute here, which is FAR easier to sit through than his fanboy stuff. Back in and a Codebreaker gets two for Star but she grabs a running DDT for the same. Fly powerbombs her down and goes up for a moonsault but Star rolls away and grabs La Majistral for the pin.

Rating: D. Uh...what the heck was that? They set up a lucha de apuesta and blow it off in the span of eight minutes? That's totally out of character for this promotion and I'm really surprised they did this. I know it's because Super Fly recently lost his mask in Mexico and they had to get rid of it here too, but they could have built this up for weeks given their taping schedule. One good note here: Star looked like a wrestler who happened to be a woman. That's a good sign.

Post break, Fly kneels so Star can unmask him in a pretty emotional moment. Pentagon Jr. comes in and snaps his arm.

Lucha Underground Title: Prince Puma vs. King Cuerno

So is Cuerno Puma's father or are they from different countries? The champ has Hernandez, Konnan and Mundo in his corner but Cuerno's partners are revealed to be Cage and Texano. Feeling out process to start with both guys grabbing wristlocks but Cuerno bails to the floor. Puma dives on the partners but they throw him to Cuerno for a neckbreaker. Mundo and Hernandez come over for a save but the sandpaper snake stops them.

We get a...oh you don't know what Striker means when he mentions a sandpaper snake? It's Texano's bullrops. How did you not get that connection? Back in and Cuerno stomps away before kicking Puma hard in the ribs. Texano gets in some cheap shots on Puma's leg as the referees around here continue to be kind of worthless. Puma comes back with a Superman Punch but eats an enziguri from the apron.

A big flip dive over the top takes Cuerno down (why he was on the floor isn't shown as we were looking at the commentators) and Mundo follows with a flip pf his own. Striker: "Arguably the best athlete on the

planet!" WHAT PLANET IS HE TALKING ABOUT???? Mundo is good but dude, come on. Back in and Puma gets two off something like a Blue Thunder Bomb but misses a springboard 450. Cuerno rolls some Germans for two but the partners get up on the apron for some cheap shots but Puma wants Hernandez to get down (Puma didn't see Hernandez interfere). The 630 retains Puma's title.

Rating: C. Uh...why was the title on the line here? Tell me, what does this add to this match? Cuerno lost his last match against Mundo in the cage but for some reason he gets a title match here? That's the kind of bad logic that Lucha Underground usually avoids but this felt like throwing a title match on the show so they could say we have a title match tonight. The wrestling was your standard fare here but I never got into it with all the other moving parts at ringside.

Hernandez tries to raise Puma's hand but the champ doesn't want his praise. Everything breaks down into a big brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. They're entitled to a misfire every now and then. The problem with this show was the lack of patience and wanting to just hotshot everything at once. Instead of letting something build up over a few weeks, they announced a mask vs. mask match and a title match on one show. That's the kind of low level mistake that you don't expect from these guys and I hope it's not something that continues in the future. Not much to this week but it's hard to get too upset in 45 minutes.

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Writer Doesn't Like Mainstream Sports Covering WWE

Because it's not real you see.

It's another day and another story of a "mainstream" sports writer deciding that professional wrestling is "rasslin" and something not worthy of coverage on ESPN or CBS. In this case it's Michael Bradley of the National Sports Journalism Center at Indiana University.

The gist of the opening of his piece is basically saying that wrestling is being used to fill in space on a 24/7 sports station and how it's the price we pay. This leads to saying it started with ESPN "breaking" (his quotation marks) the story that Brock Lesnar wasn't returning to the UFC. This is the first red flag I see. Why is this not a breaking story? Mixed martial arts is certainly a mainstream sport, but for some reason a former World Champion opting not to return isn't a story.

I wonder if say, Tom Crean not returning to coach the Hoosiers' basketball team would be considered mainstream enough. As I'm writing this, the first four articles on their website are all about college basketball, followed by the article on the mainstream coverage of Wrestlemania. I don't see anything about Major League Baseball or the upcoming NFL Draft, but it seems that college basketball is important enough to cover, in addition to the Indy Racing League. Mixed martial arts apparently isn't worthy of a breaking news story though. Good to know.

Then the ESPN commentators talked about Wrestlemania and their Twitter and Facebook feeds were used to discuss the results of the show. So now it's not ok to dedicate part of an unlimited space to talk about the results of a show that runs four hours of a year. By the way, on the

group's Facebook page: an article on football analyst Lee Corso, led by a discussion of how often he gargles to keep his throat strong. Back and forth, hand to hand combat with former collegiate athletes: not ok, but football analysts gargling: ok. Again, good to know.

Now we'll get to the point of this: apparently Bradley doesn't care for the idea of mixing fake results with real results, because it might confuse the fans. Apparently this could lead to breaking down sports films or discussing TV, which is totally different than airing dramatic films on ESPN (which they've done) or Harlem Globetrotters games (which they air from time to time and Bradley says would be the next horrible step) or anything besides hard hitting journalism at the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network.

Then we get to the big line at the end: "It's fun to talk about Lesnar and his fellow rasslers, but it's not journalism." That word of "rasslers" tells me everything I need to know here. That one word makes Bradley come off as just another writer who seems to have no idea of how wrestling works and sees himself as a defender of REAL athletics who has no idea what wrestling is all about. Yes, the results are fake and it's been a known factor for years. For some reason, this means it's completely ridiculous to cover.

There was an excellent ad campaign from the WWF back in 1998 with a lot of the roster talking about their mainstream athletic backgrounds such as Ron Simmons, who has since gone into the College Football Hall of Fame and Ken Shamrock, who was a UFC Champion (oh wait that's not worthy of a mention. I wasn't sure if I was wrong about the site's coverage of UFC but their last story involving them was posted over a year ago so it doesn't seem to be a priority).

Apparently talking about the post-career lives and activities of athletes such as Brock Lesnar or the Rock, or current mainstream athletes like Ronda Rousey, would just befuddle the average fan because I guess they're not smart enough to figure out the difference. To paraphrase the end of that ad campaign, try watching their boots, because they're probably working a lot harder than some of the "real" sports out there.

Overall, I've certainly seen far worse attacks on wrestling and other than implying that wrestling or other sports fans might not be bright enough to know the difference between scripted or unscripted results and using the antiquated term of "rasslers", he doesn't take any unnecessary shots at the sport.

As usual though, it seems that he heard the letters WWE and had already decided that it was just guys doing fake moves to each other because that's what he heard it was growing up. It's a shame that mainstream writers don't give it a bigger chance, but with columns like this out there, it's not surprising that they don't as it basically shames them for trying to talk about it. But hey, it's fine to air poker, cheerleading, darts, spelling bees and specials on fantasy football or the NFL Draft right?

Here's the original article:

<http://sportsjournalism.org/sports-media-news/lets-hope-media-outlets-remember-what-e-in-wwe-means/>

Smackdown – April 9, 2015: He Really Is Awesome

Smackdown

Date: April 9, 2015

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

For the second week in a row, the advertised big match is Sheamus/Bad News Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler/Daniel Bryan and that's really all there is to talk about here. Raw ended with Orton becoming #1 contender to Rollins' title after beating Ryback and Reigns in a triple threat.

Tonight we might see the Extreme Rules card take more shape as Smackdown

gets to announce a match every now and then. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to open things up. He says it was one of the highlights of his career to climb that ladder and win the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania. However, the actions of the man make the title (which says Intercontinental Heavyweight Wrestling Champion. I bet Vince is FURIOUS at the belt over that), so Bryan wants to defend this title against anyone who wants a shot.

That's what he did after Wrestlemania against Dolph Ziggler, but Sheamus come out looking all stupid with a Brogue Kick to the face. So last week he fought Sheamus, but somewhere in the match he saw Wade (first time hearing that name in a while) Barrett...and now we all see Barrett on the ramp. He says he ended Bryan's magical week with a Bull Hammer, and the fiendish gleam on Barrett's face during that line is great. This brings out Sheamus to say he followed it up with a Brogue Kick.

Sheamus tolerates Barrett because he isn't a munchkin like Bryan, so the two of them should come down there and give Bryan a beating because they can. They get in the ring but Ziggler comes out to call Sheamus the offspring of Captain Jack Sparrow and Carrot Top. The fight is about to be on but here's Big Show because ruining main events just isn't enough for him anymore. Big Show wants in on this beatdown but here's Roman Reigns to even things up. A quick fight likely makes the tag match a six man. I'll take that over a spontaneous match. They've got something with this tag team feud with the title thrown in.

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Non-title with the New Day getting booed out of the building on the entrances. It's a good sign that WWE has quickly caught onto the reality that no one likes them and is already starting to turn them. There's an idea to the team but it's just working as presented. Big E. wants everyone to get up and clap along with them so that's exactly what they do, but with the SUCKS part added in. That makes Big E. think something has to change and that the fans have to love them. Woods is the odd man out here.

Kofi and Kidd get things going with Tyson taking him into the corner for some forearm before it's off to Cesaro. He mocks the clapping and gets the crowd going again as the champions are the default good guys here. Kofi low bridges Cesaro to the floor and Big E. launches Kofi to the floor to take out the champs as we take a break. Back with Big E. suplexing Kidd but needing a tag. Cesaro breaks up a tag though and rag dolls Big E. into a gutwrench suplex. That's scary strength.

Back to Tyson for some knees to the back as Lawler is talking more than I've heard him do in months. Big E. finally shoves Cesaro off but misses a charge into the post for two. There's the Cesaro Swing into the dropkick from Tyson for two more with Kofi making the save. E. knocks Cesaro out of the air and makes the hot tag so Kofi can clean house with dropkicks and shots to the head. The Boom Drop sets up more clapping and sucking as everything breaks down. Kidd grabs a fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 10:00.

Rating: C. Not much to see here but it could have been far worse. They need to turn New Day soon and thankfully we seem well on the way to that point. Cesaro and Kidd are starting to establish themselves as a really good heel team, which is something we haven't seen in a long time.

Recap of Monday's triple threat and the events that led up to it.

Free Network month shill. Remember when you had to pay for that?

Curtis Axel vs. Neville

In case you didn't get enough of it the first time ten days ago. Axel wants to know what Neville is going to do when Axelmania runs wild on him. Neville flips around to start and grabs an armdrag but gets caught with a knee to the ribs. Neville's front flips lead to Axel charging into a boot in the corner, followed by a running forearm. The spinning dive over the ropes takes Axel out again and it's a slam followed by the Red Arrow for the pin at 2:17. That's the same match they had on Raw after Wrestlemania.

Natalya, Cameron and Alicia Fox insist they didn't try to con Kane into the Divas battle royal on Raw. Naomi deserves the shot and all but

Cameron says she's going to win. Alicia asks how long Cameron has been here and it's been THREE YEARS??? She's this bad after THREE YEARS??? Alicia and Natalya get in a fight.

Alicia Fox vs. Natalya

Cameron is guest referee so we can see her be horrible at something besides wrestling. To her credit, she found a referee's cut off top and changed in the span of a commercial. It's a catfight to start and they trade slaps until Cameron breaks up a fight next to the ropes. Natalya does her step over into the dropkick spot for two but Fox hits something like the Helluva Kick to take over. Fox's northern lights suplex gets the same and we hit the chinlock. Back up and a cross body gets two for Natalya and the Sharpshooter gets the win at 3:41.

Rating: D+. As you may have noticed, there was a lot of play by play here. Here's the reason why: these people have no characters. Cameron is close with the stuck up chick who only cares about herself, but Alicia is just Alicia and Natalya is just a veteran and serious wrestler. There's nowhere to go with those characters as there's nothing that stands out about them. The same is true for most of the Divas. Even Summer is just there as the dancing stuff is gone. I'm not saying we need to go back to the days of GLOW, but something would be nice.

Cameron lays both of them out with DDTs post match.

Bray Wyatt narrates a video about Erick Rowan, who was a child in a man's world. How could society do what they've done to him? They took away Rowan's innocence and we're all guilty, even though we don't know it. Bray has fixed him and now Rowan is free. We might have seen this video when the Family split up last year. If nothing else it's cool to see a video like this to set up the matches later. What happened to the days of promos to set stuff up? It doesn't have to have high production values. Just a quick promo from backstage would be fine.

Here's Bray in the ring for his match but first he talks about remembering the days when Erick Rowan was lost. Society saw all of Rowan's flaws but Bray saw possibilities. "Yes Erick, you too can job to Big Show." The fans give Bray the WHAT treatment as he talks about being

Rowan's brother. He fixed Erick like you fix a broken toy and then set him free. Society has returned Rowan to Bray and he's broken all over again. Tonight Bray is going to teach Rowan one last lesson: no matter what, trust no one because evil is inside of us all. If he'll destroy someone he called his brother, imagine what he'll do to you.

Bray Wyatt vs. Erick Rowan

Bray tells him to bring it on to start so Erick runs over him to knock Wyatt outside. Back in and Bray grabs him by the beard but you don't do that to a former genius. What you do instead is send Rowan into the post and then knock him off the apron and into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Rowan fighting out of a chinlock but the backplash hits knees. Rowan hits some running splashes in the corner for two but Bray rolls outside when Erick goes up top. That works better for Bray as he takes Rowan's head off with a clothesline and follows up with the backplash. The Rock Bottom doesn't work but Wyatt takes him down with the flying body block. Sister Abigail ends Erick at 9:34.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here for the most part but I like that they're giving the Wyatts what seems to be some closure. Either that or they're repackaging Rowan into something else. I was interested in the genius gimmick but that was sacrificed on the alter of Big Show, next to Hideo Itami. Bray needs something to do now that the Undertaker match is over. I'd love to see him actually win a feud against a top name for a change too.

Bray cradles Rowan's head post match.

It's time for a special movie edition of MizTV. We see the trailer for Marine 4 but before Miz can get anywhere else, his co-star Summer Rae cuts him off. They get in an argument over who was the real star of the movie with Summer calling him a co-star and Miz calling her a featured extra. Summer brings up Mizdow eliminating him from the battle royal and the fans chant his name.

Miz asks if the fans know the backstory of Damien Sandow. He was fired

twice until Miz saved his career and gave him a purpose. Cue Mizdow but Miz cuts him off and says Mizdow is going to go on a steep decline. These people can't get him on track but Miz is capable and willing to because he's a charitable person. He'll do it for an apology and everything can go back to the way it was.

All Mizdow has to do to get everything back is shake Miz's hand and apologize. Hey now, quit adding things to the rules. Miz asks whose hands Mizdow wants his career in, because the people will drop him in a heartbeat. Damien apologizes....for not doing this earlier and the beating is on. Miz leaves so Mizdow kisses Summer, who seems to like it.

Video on WWE taking over the Bay Area for Wrestlemania weekend.

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns/Dolph Ziggler vs. Big Show/Sheamus/Bad News Barrett

I guess because the original four needed star power to carry them? Sheamus and Ziggler get things going with the Irishman taking Dolph into the corner for a right hand to the ribs from Big Show. A big chop puts Ziggler down as Dolph is firmly into his standard style. Dolph dropkicks the knee out and gets two off the running DDT, only to get chopped out of the corner. Barrett comes in for the first time and slaps on a chinlock but the fans are already cheering for Dolph to get out.

Winds of Change gets two but Ziggler flips over Sheamus and dives into the tag to Bryan. The YES Kicks have Sheamus in trouble and Daniel backdrops him to the floor for the Flying Goat. They're moving in this one so far. As Bryan throws Sheamus back in, Barrett gets up and kicks Daniel in the head as we take a break. Back with Bryan getting slammed by Big Show and a huge elbow getting two. Barrett comes in for another chinlock as the fans sound like they want Roman.

Show breaks up a hot tag attempt but his chokeslam is countered into the YES Lock. This time it's Sheamus making the save and trying a superplex, only to get knocked off by Bryan. Daniel's cross body is caught but he spins into a DDT and makes the hot tag to Reigns. Roman cleans house with Superman Punches as everything breaks down. Ziggler and Sheamus go to the floor and Bryan hits Show with the running knee. The spear out of the

corner gives Reigns the pin on Barrett at 15:18.

Rating: B-. Pretty good match here with everyone moving quickly and putting in some efforts. It's interesting to see that Reigns is back to his old style and looking cool after not having the Wrestlemania main event looming over him. I think people are going to like him better when he's not out there against the most popular guy in the company and now that he's been able to give us something to connect to. Now if only they could get him completely away from Big Show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a pretty basic but well done show with decent wrestling and some midcard storyline development. That's about all you can ask for from Smackdown these days as the illusion of the move back to Thursdays making the show matter is long gone. I do like that tag feud revolving around the Intercontinental Title though as it's something that could go somewhere if they let it get interesting. Not bad this week but nothing great.

Results

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd b. New Day – Fisherman's neckbreaker to Kingston

Neville b. Curtis Axel – Red Arrow

Natalya b. Alicia Fox – Sharpshooter

Bray Wyatt b. Erick Rowan – Sister Abigail

Roman Reigns/Daniel Bryan/Dolph Ziggler b. Sheamus/Big Show/Bad News Barrett – Spear to Barrett

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

My Response To People Who Overuse The Term Burying

Is to show that the WWE is burying EVERY SINGLE MEMBER OF ITS ROSTER! **Adam Rose** – Stuck in a comedy tag team and they didn't care enough about the Bunny storyline to follow up. It's burial time, all the time.

Bad News Barrett – Reduced to a glorified commentator. Why would I care about someone like him? Bad News for you dude: You're buried.

Big E. – Sent into a horrible team that no one cares about after being in a six man tag team match last year at the Raw after Wrestlemania where the fans booed him. Oh and he's black so he's never going anywhere. Don't sweat it Big E. You're just being buried.

Big Show – Look what happened to Cesaro after he won the battle royal last year. He's clearly going to get buried. Oh and he didn't get a pin the next night. We're going to need a big box to bury a guy this big, but rest assured, he shall be buried.

Bo Dallas – He was eliminated by an NXT guy. He's not even good enough to be buried by the major league guy. Dallas is far enough down that he's being developmentally buried.

Bray Wyatt – Look at all those pay per view losses. He hasn't won a single match on pay per view THIS YEAR. All he got on a pay per view was an interview where he ripped off another

guy's entrance. Follow the buzzards to his buried body.

Brock Lesnar – Do I even need to explain this one? Lost the title and HASN'T DONE A THING SINCE! Now he's suspended and won't get his revenge. People are going to forget about him and he'll lose his heat. The next big burial indeed.

The Bunny – See Rose. They didn't care enough about him to even unmask him as Darren Young. And I know that's where it was going because I read it on a dirt sheet and they never make stuff up. I hope he can hop out of that grave he's been buried in.

Cesaro – A TAG TEAM CHAMPION? Well, he's screwed. He was so bad they stuck him on the pre-show. TWICE! What's the Swiss word for buried?

Curtis Axel – Had to sell for Hulk Hogan and a celebrity with the 2.4 inch Pythons. Can we get a clock on how long he's been buried for?

Damien Mizdow – Geez man. How can someone allegedly so smart (like I'm smart. I read wrestling news on the internet bro.) not come up with something better than just copying someone else? He's totally ripping off Buddy Landell with Ric Flair from the 80s. Maybe he can get a stunt double when they throw him in the grave.

Daniel Bryan – Yeah he won the Intercontinental Title but he lost in his first non-title match by countout due to interference. NO! He doesn't have any hope and YES! He is being buried. It's so clear that you would have to be a goat faced moron to not see it.

Darren Young – They put him in a gimmick where he makes fun of people and shills old shirts. He's like the black Charlie Haas. Oh and he's black and therefore buried. Total racism.

Dean Ambrose – He lost both of his pay per view main events

late last year, only got into the final five of the Rumble and then lost his Wrestlemania title match. Then Cena beat him in the US Title match the next night on Raw. There's no hope for his future, but maybe he warm himself with all the memories of how people TOTALLY said he would be the star of the Shield.

Diego – He was replaced by a short guy named Kalisto as the resident luchador and he's second fiddle to a guy in a bull suit. Either way, bury the dude. Just make sure it's Diego instead of Fernando. Actually never mind as they're the same person.

Dolph Ziggler – Where do I even start? He hasn't won a thing since he won the World Title because that was Cena's win at Survivor Series and he couldn't even mean anything because STING won't get out of his way. Then he jobbed to Luke Harper because this company has a thing for beards. Maybe he can show off the shovel used to bury him.

Erick Rowan – When has he actually won something recently? He's just a big version of Daniel Bryan anyway. Maybe he can avoid being buried by pretending to be a sheep or something.

Fandango – When the feature of your act is the dancing chick who has never won a singles match in like five years, you're just the new and improved version of the same buried Fandango.

Fernando – He was replaced by a short guy named Sin Cara as the resident luchador and he's second fiddle to a guy in a bull suit. Either way, bury the dude. Just make sure it's Fernando instead of Diego. Actually never mind as they're the same person.

Goldust – WWE cares about him so much that he wins a match and lost all of his heat due to a post match attack. Then he got crushed by Rusev after Raw to complete the burial.

Heath Slater – They hate this guy so much that they go from a 3 Count knockoff to making him look like Apollo Creed. Even

Drew McIntyre in TNA is getting pushed harder than this guy. I wonder if the guy burying him needed two helpers so it could be a THREE MAN BURIAL?

Jack Swagger – He's lost to Rusev six times in less than a year. That's like Zack Ryder territory and we all know he's been buried.

Jey Uso/Jimmy Uso – Let's combine this one into one. They can't even beat Los Matadores and they're only there to push Total Divas "star" Naomi. It doesn't help that they're just a placeholder tag team and haven't done anything since they dropped the tag belts. Siva Tao your ways into the burial positions guys.

John Cena – This guy is the KING of burials. How do you go from the main event of Wrestlemania two years ago to basically being the TV Champion and fighting guys like Dean "I used to be a big deal when I said NOPE that one time!" Ambrose and Star "Please think of Mockingjay when you see me and forget that I'm jobbing to old guys" Dust. How could they put this guy over Rusev? He's even using more than five moves to make you think he knows more than five moves! How can you trust this guy??? You won't be able to see him now that he's been buried.

Kalisto – He's just there to make people forget about Rey Mysterio. Flip yourself into the line for being buried and LEARN SOME ENGLISH. Clearly people hate him because he's Hispanic right?

Kane – PUT THE MASK BACK ON! You were totally cool back then when you were the old dude in the mask instead of the old dude in the dress pants. Now you're just getting speared and pinned all the time by a guy with no heat like Roman Reigns. I would say you're buried but you're way too old to belong in the ground anymore.

Kofi Kingston – Just a jumping guy. He's black though and in that trio of losers so we'll have him jump into the grave.

Konnor – They're just using him to cash in on the Crusher stuff from last year. Why else would you name someone Konnor? Thankfully the WWE has clearly seen that there's no future for he and Viktor and they're burying them accordingly.

Luke Harper – When your only gimmick is you have a dirty shirt, you're clearly being buried. GO BACK TO BRAY'S SIDE YOU FREAKY LOOKING LOSER!

Mark Henry – They brought him back to put over Roman Reigns and Sheamus? There's no future in being a jobber to the stars and if you need any more proof, they put him in a battle royal a few weeks back. AND LET HIM WIN IT! Of course on top of that, he's black and all black people are buried in WWE. Because they're black and WWE is racist.

The Miz – An actor gimmick? That's the best they can do? Then they keep giving him movie roles and have him lose to a guy most famous for imitating Miz and wearing Lanny Poffo's thrown out trunks? I hope we can have quiet at the cemetery when they officially bury him, but they did that when they made him play third fiddle when he kept the title at Wrestlemania a few years back. If you want further proof, they gave him a Tag Team Title a few months ago. How can you possibly believe that he's not being buried?

Neville – Losing to the World Champion in his SECOND MATCH on the main roster? Do I even need to explain why that's a burial?

R-Truth – Just there for comedy and there's that whole black guys don't get pushed. Buried! That's what's up!

Randy Orton – You think Cena sucks because he only knows five moves? RKO, backbreaker, elevated DDT, right hand, I'm waiting for the fifth move. We'll call that a BURIAL OUT OF NOWHERE!

The Rock – He came back for five Wrestlemanias and can only get TALKING SEGMENTS??? That's the ultimate sign of being put out of pasture. Get out of the ring and just let Ronda Rousey show you how REAL WRESTLING is done you actor. So not only is he being buried in talking segments year after year, at the same time he's burying people who really deserve the time. Do you have any idea how hard it is to bury people and be buried at the same time??? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU COULD DO THAT!!!

Roman Reigns – Totally choked in the biggest match ever and then got stuck in a meaningless six man the next night as Orton's partner. He's just Cena with a tan anyway and we've already established that Cena is being buried, so Reigns is being buried with a tan and stupid looking tattoos.

Rusev – No one cares about him unless Lana and the tank are there. Plus he lost his big title match so he's clearly being buried.

Ryback – Can they pick a gimmick with this guy? Not that it matters because each one leads to him being buried. First he was a monster and then A FREAKING REFEREE costs him the title match? Buried. Then he's a heel who goes to a draw against Cena in his main events. Buried. Then he's a bully and that doesn't sound like being a star, meaning he's not in the sky. You know where that leaves him right? Buried. In the ground. Now he's back to the beginning as a monster, which is clearly just leading to him being buried all over again.

Seth Rollins – Yeah he's the Undisputed WWE World Heavyweight Champion, but they're clearly doing nothing with him. He had to sell for a rookie and needs comedy goons to save him all the time. Curb stomp him into the grave and put him out of his misery before he has a rematch for the title in the main event of the pay per view.

Sheamus – Comes back from being a four time World Champion and they turn him heel? That's what you do when you have nothing

left to do with someone so his days are numbered. Plus he couldn't even beat a vanilla midget like Bryan without help so he's done. Buried.

Sin Cara – A masked tag match? What happened to being the most popular guy in Mexico? Leave the mask on to hide your face you buried loser.

Stardust – He's lost two title shots in eight days and is there as a movie tie-in character to some girly movie like Thirsty Games or whatever it's called. Buried and buried bad.

Sting – Well he's never won a match so he's already behind Barry Horowitz. How do you get more buried than that?

Titus O'Neil – I'm tired so we'll stick with he's black and therefore buried. He's even in a black tag team so it's even worse. Buried again.

Triple H – This guy invented being buried! Getting thrown around by a celebrity? That's even worse than when he got slapped around by an actor back in 2000. When is the last time he won a World Title anyway? Now he's beating up old WCW rejects like Sting, which means he's just fighting jobbers. There's no point to having him around anymore so we'll say he's buried.

Tyson Kidd – Yeah he's got a belt, but it's the same one he had a few years ago and now he's pitching Burger King ads while wearing lame headphones and showing off his love for his cats? That's the best they've got for him? Oh yeah he's buried.

Undertaker – The guy has lost how many BURIED alive matches? He's literally been buried multiple times so I think you get the point here.

Viktor – He got beaten up by the APA and DX. How does he not understand that he's being buried?

Xavier Woods – The leader of the trio of black losers. Still means he's being buried though. Yeah he wants to work with children and is working on his PH.D, but can he win a match? Until we know he can, he can defend his dissertation after getting out of that dirt from when they buried him.

Zack Ryder – Do I even need to explain this one? He's had like four matches with Rusev that add up to less than five minutes. And to think a guy like Rock talked (Like I said, he only does talking segments!) so highly of him after the main event of Survivor Series 2012.

All Divas but the Bellas are of course being buried so we'll put them in a big group.

Bella Twins – They're just there because of a reality show with ratings that keep falling. They may be "stars" there but here they're just propping up tombstones. I mean, they lost at Wrestlemania and weren't even important enough to defend their title. Yeah they're both champion. The name graphics said so and even if it might have been a slip up, it's how I interpreted it so therefore it's true.

Finally, some other people they have on screen.

El Torito – They can't decide if he's a man or a bull. If they don't care enough, they're buried him already.

Hornswoggle – Well they gave him a movie so he wouldn't be on screen. Sounds like a burial to me.

The Stooges – How many finishers do they keep taking? I don't remember two J's being in the word buried, but maybe I just missed it.

Lana – She gets a dead end foreigner gimmick and isn't even on Total Divas. Bury her and her legs.

Paul Heyman – How many times can he say the same thing over and over again? He's nothing without Lesnar so just like

ECW,'s he's dead and buried.

Stephanie McMahon – She got beaten up by Ronda Rousey (I know her of course, because I pay for the Wrestling Observer Newsletter for my MMA news and that makes me a REAL fan) on the biggest night of the year. Yeah she beat a Bella. Freaking woop. Bury her with the rest of the McMahon Family so we can get a good boss in there. Is Sapolsky available?

William Regal – They already buried him. I mean, he's the third NXT boss in like two years. How much could they possibly care about him?

Zeb Colter – How does this guy have a job? All he does is talk and claims an injury after he FINALLY took a bump. Bury him next to Swagger and Cesaro.

SEE? WWE BURIES EVERYONE ON THE ROSTER! I JUST PROVED IT!!!

Oh and I got this list off the WWE Roster Wikipedia page. Bury that too since it hasn't done anything for me since I started writing this list.

NXT – April 8, 2015: Let's Go Hideo!

NXT

Date: April 8, 2015

Location: San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

We're on the road again with some matches taped for this year's Wrestlemania Axxess weekend. For at least the last two years, there has been a ring set up on the Axxess floor for live matches, including some

title defenses. Tonight we're going to see some of those matches and maybe some from the well received house show the same weekend. Let's get to it.

The main story tonight is a tournament for a spot in the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal at Wrestlemania XXXI. Here are the brackets.

Finn Balor

Baron Corbin

Bull Dempsey

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Jason Jordan

Kalisto

Adrian Neville

Video of Wrestlemania's impact on the area, which I believe was shown on both Raw and Smackdown.

We get a quick recap of the first round to give us the final four.

Balor rolled up Corbin to advance, Breeze beat Dempsey with a Beauty Shot, Itami's running kick to the face knocked Jordan out and the Red Arrow advanced Neville.

Here are the updated brackets.

Finn Balor

Tyler Breeze

Hideo Itami

Adrian Neville

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Hideo Itami vs. Adrian

Neville

Neither guy gets an entrance. The crowd is very small, maybe about 200, as the ring is just tucked away in a corner of the convention center. They fight over a wristlock to start with Neville taking him down to the mat but Itami counters into an arm crank for a near fall of his own. The fans boo something off camera as the guys have a staredown and Neville teases going after whoever it was.

We hit the dueling chants as Neville grabs a headlock. That goes nowhere so Hideo hits a running kick to the chest and clotheslines Neville out to the floor. Neville makes it back in at nine and the fans don't seem thrilled with him. Some shots to the chest and a big back elbow get two on Hideo but he comes back with his three clotheslines (of course) and the tornado neck snap across the top rope.

The top rope clothesline gets two and Itami follows up with a sleeper (Fans: "GO TO SLEEP!") before switching off to a dragon sleeper. The GTS is countered and Neville blasts him with a superkick for two. Neville has to bail out of a shooting star and gets caught by the running dropkick in the corner. The Shotgun Kick sends Itami to the finals at 11:16.

Rating: C+. Good enough but Itami really needs to open up the offense. First it was nothing but kicks and now it's primarily clotheslines. Star throwing in some more submissions or throws or whatever, but stop using one or two moves over and over. Neville was working heel here and it was kind of odd to see. Not bad or anything but just a sharp change from his usual style.

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Semi-Finals: Finn Balor vs. Tyler Breeze

Balor gets an entrance. Breeze poses on the corner to start so Balor dropkicks him in the face and poses exactly the same. More kicks to the chest get two on Breeze but he takes Balor down and puts on a chinlock (Tyler: "ASK HIM PLEASE!"). Balor quickly rolls through and hits a basement dropkick, followed by even more kicks to the face and chest for two. We definitely have a theme in this match. Breeze finally mixes it up with some forearms but charges into the Sling Blade. The Coup de Grace

ends Breeze at 5:22.

Rating: C+. It's very telling how much more of a presence Balor has in half the time that Itami had. The guy is just awesome in the ring and has the full package. Even though the match was nothing special and Breeze was basically getting squashed for five minutes, it felt more entertaining than the previous match.

Dana Brooke debuts next week and calls herself the Total Diva.

Video package on the NXT house show from Wrestlemania weekend and it looks like a big Ring of Honor show, just with HHH in the ring. It really is amazing that WWE basically has their own in house indy company. This show looks like a blast.

Sami Zayn vs. Rhyno next week.

Battle Royal Qualifying Tournament Final: Hideo Itami vs. Finn Balor

We get a wide shot of the arena to show several hundred more people on the hard camera side. The fans are behind Balor as the guys do a wrestling sequence, ending with a standoff. Balor takes him down and cranks on the arm before a dropkick gets two. Itami comes back with some kicks to the chest and puts on a chinlock. That goes as far as a chinlock can take you and Finn rolls out for another basement dropkick.

An enziguri in the corner knocks Hideo off the top for two but he comes back with the top rope clothesline. The GTS is teased again but Balor escapes into the Pele to put both guys down again. Back up and Hideo wins a strike off, followed by a running basement dropkick in the corner. The Sling Blade out of nowhere drops Itami but he crotches Finn to break up the Coup de Grace. Yet another GTS attempt is countered and the Shotgun Kick sends Hideo to Wrestlemania at 8:15.

Rating: C. I wasn't feeling this one as much as they built up the GTS through the match but they still didn't let it hit. I'm glad Hideo won though as having Balor in his spot at Wrestlemania would have been a waste of him. All the kicks are getting annoying too and it's really hard to care when it's the same stuff all show long. Good enough match but it

didn't have the time to get anywhere.

They shake hands post match.

We get a cool video on Hideo Itami, dating back to his press conference in Osaka, announcing his signing with WWE. Then he debuted in NXT, then he beat Balor in the match from earlier on this show. We see Itami going through the curtain to be greeted by the contingent of HHH, Tatsumi Fujinami and.....Hillbilly Jim?

Itami introduces us to his family and again, his English is fine. His language skills really aren't an excuse for his lack of promos. You can keep them short and get the point across well enough. Also included is a clip of Itami hitting the GTS on Breeze at the house show and how people freaked out online. Naturally, Stephanie is RIGHT THERE to comment on the impact on social media.

Itami is in the battle royal. We see him warming up backstage and all his friends praising him for making it this far this fast. He comes out to the crowd, Cole gives him a special introduction, he knocks out Dallas, and then Big Show treats him like any given jobber as Cole says "welcome to the big leagues." I'm SO glad we got to see him beaten down that fast. It just wouldn't have been complete without seeing Big Show looking dominant. Hideo cries once he gets backstage and a bunch of people congratulate him. Even Big Show says he looks forward to working with Itami again. His kids hug him to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade as it's mainly a theme show with some wrestling included. The stuff on Itami is a really cool feature (Big Show dominance aside) and made him look like a big deal. Above all else though, I want to focus on that house show. On the Rise and Fall of ECW, Paul Heyman talks about wanting to make his shows into a big party where the fans say "WOW! I want to go there! I want to buy my ticket and be right there in the middle of all that."

That's the feeling I got watching that house show. It looked like a blast and something I'd love to get to see. It's the feeling you don't get on Raw because NXT feels far more fan friendly and built on excitement. Like I said, it's basically an in house indy company with very little

connection to the main roster. This is a special promotion and it's going to keep going for a long time at this pace.

Results

Hideo Itami b. Adrian Neville – Shotgun Kick

Finn Balor b. Tyler Breeze – Coup de Grace

Hideo Itami b. Finn Balor – Shotgun Kick

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

New Column: Come One, Come All

Looking at the open challenges from John Cena and how they could do a lot of good things for the title. And I have statistics!

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-come-one-come/34928/>

Monday Nitro – November 15, 1999: Russo's Finest

Monday Nitro #214

Date: November 15, 1999

Location: Barton Coliseum, Little Rock, Arkansas

Attendance: 10,435

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

It's the go home show for Mayhem so tonight we get the tournament down to the final four. The big question this week though is what genre of direct to video movie are we getting? Last week it was thriller with Kimberly vs. David Flair, mixed in with the comedy of Kevin Nash as the Grand Wizard. Heaven help me but let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

There's a cage over the ring. Of course there is.

Norman Smiley vs. Jimmy Hart

Hardcore, meaning Smiley comes out in football pads and Jimmy in....a suit of armor. Well that's kind of Genius of him. Jimmy brings in some weapons and actually doesn't die at first because Norman can't see through his helmet. The weapons shots have no effect on Hart so Norman just takes him down by the legs. Hart comes back with some powder to the face and Norman has to take the helmet off to cry.

The fans loudly chant NORMAN, but I'm sure that's just because of the weapons and not the effort or comedic skills he's displaying right? Jimmy gets in some weapons shots but Norman gets up, drawing out Knobbs with a chair to the head. Brian loads up a table but Jimmy misses a dive through it, giving Norman the easy pin.

Rating: D+. This is one of those matches where the guys tried and were

having fun, but they firmly hit the roof of what they were capable of doing. It doesn't help that this is to set up the epic showdown between Knobbs and Smiley, when it seems like there's something entertaining in having Hart as a hardcore guy if you keep him in the armor.

Knobbs beats Smiley down post match.

Here are the tournament brackets.

Bret Hart

Kidman

Total Package

Sting

Chris Benoit

Scott Hall

Buff Bagwell

Jeff Jarrett

If Curt Hennig can beat Goldberg tonight, he gets a new contract. And what stops the Powers That Be from saying he's fired from that one if he loses?

Kimberly talks to Terry Taylor. Why is she in the building after last week?

Tonight, Nash is dressed like Sid, complete with some pretty good prosthetic makeup. Well at least he isn't Slick.

AC Jazz is out of the Nitro Girls so Fyre and Tygress jump Spice. Next.

Here are the Outsiders with Nash as Sid, with a chin that is far bigger than the real version. Keeping in mind that Sid is from Arkansas, the fans aren't thrilled with this. Nash says he rules the world about five times but stops to remind us that he's stupid. Cue Sid, who has had enough of these two. We get the famous line of "you are only half of the

man that I am, and I have half the brains that you do" which has Hall nearly doubled over in laughter. Sid is already in a match tonight, but he wants to get Nash out of retirement on top of that. Nash says no so Sid calls him a shell of his former self and Nash says.....nothing.

Tonight, Booker has to face Creative Control, officially named Gerald and Patrick. Why having the Harris Twins have the same names as the Stooges is supposed to be funny isn't clear but I'm sure Russo gets a chuckle out of it. Booker says Midnight will strike.

Kimberly tries to see the Powers That Be but the Twins stop her.

Post break, Kimberly is in the Powers' office and Russo puts her in a match with Asya. There's going to be a special referee.

Nash comes into Russo's office.

Booker T. vs. Creative Control

Before he can get to the ring, Booker is stopped by Chavo for an Amway pitch. After that comedy spot goes nowhere, Booker goes after we'll say Patrick but gets whipped into Gerald's boot. Tony stops talking about the match to say the Powers That Be have rescinded Nash's retirement stipulation. Tony: "It was a lame angle anyway." Every show I watch, I understand Cornette's rantings and ravings just a bit more.

The Twins start double teaming him and take it outside where Booker can only fight one at a time. Back in and Booker manages a dropkick to put both guys down, setting up the ax kick and a missile dropkick for two with Gerald making a save. The H Bomb gets the pin on Booker a few seconds later.

The gong strikes and Midnight appears to knock out both Twins. This is after she got laid out by Jarrett last week so the effect isn't all there.

Post break, Russo threatens to make Creative Control into bikers again. They're banished to go find the luchadors and Torrie.

Evan Karagias vs. Johnny Boone

Yes referee Johnny Boone who is wrestling in jeans here. Madusa comes out with Karagias, who gets jumped as the bell rings. Evan easily shoves him back because he's a referee as Madusa goes to commentary. They slowly go after each other because Boone, while a trained wrestler, isn't much above average and that leaves Evan Karagias to carry things. Boone gets a boot up in the corner so Madusa rams his face into her cleavage. He's out cold and Evan gets the easy pin. Keep in mind that Evan is challenging for the Cruiserweight Title this Sunday and this is his big warmup.

Madusa kisses Evan post match.

Russo has a bunch of luchadors in his face and makes them a deal: he's going to put a \$10,000 check inside a pinata and hang it from a pole. As luck would have it, Juvy is carrying a pinata. They'll all be given a stick to hit each other with too. You can see the lawsuits from here.

Dr. Death Steve Williams and Ed Ferrara as JR show up.

Creative Control keeps looking for Torrie.

Villano V vs. Juventud Guerrera vs. El Dandy vs. Silver King vs. Psychosis

It's a brawl to start and the pinata falls down fifteen seconds in. King moonsaults onto Dandy as Williams and Ferrara come to ringside. Ferrara gets on commentary and does his JR impression, listing off football stats, telling Tony to speak in soundbytes and shouting PINATA over and over. Juvy gets the pinata (PINATA! PINATA!) but the match just keeps going with the camera on Ferrara. Guerrera does the elbow drop and shakes the pinata as candy flies everywhere. Dr. Death gets in the ring and beats everyone up for the no contest, after almost everyone had the pinata at one point.

Rating: F. Well let's see. It was a bunch of racial stereotypes, the pinata didn't last twenty seconds, Juvy didn't win for no explained reason, the sticks didn't go anywhere, it was all about Dr. Death cleaning house at the end, and they spent the entire match ripping on JR after ripping on Sid earlier, Grand Wizard last week and Vince the week before. Pick any two of those reasons and you'll get why this is a

failure.

Dr. Death takes the check from King as the bell rings roughly 857 times.

Goldberg doesn't care about anything.

Nash is back in his usual clothes and says he took some time off when WCW sucked. Now that Hall is back, things are fun again. Well of course it is. He barely has to do anything but comedy and gets a huge check. Pay no attention to the company, and therefore the checks, dying before his eyes.

Goldberg vs. Curt Hennig

Goldberg is coming out of his locker room when Hennig slams the door on his head. Unlike Flair with the WarGames door, Goldberg no sells it and they brawl in the back with Goldberg getting the better of it. They fight to the aisle and the bell rings with Hennig getting knocked to ringside and looking like he's running scared.

Curt finally gets in some knees to the head as they go inside. The Robinsdale Crunch sets up a stepover toehold for well over a minute, with the referee ignoring Goldberg's shoulders being down the entire time. Goldberg finally punches him in the face and puts on a leg bar for the submission, meaning Hennig keeps his job.

Rating: D. So Hennig can lose by anything but pin and keep his job. Why would the Powers That Be want to keep him around if he never wins because he keeps submitting or getting counted out? This was another of those mostly hardcore matches which don't make people care because it doesn't last five minutes and it's part of a story that makes no sense.

Kimberly is on the phone with Page when the lights flicker. She panics at the fear of bad writing but Jim Duggan comes up with a flashlight and says the fuses in this place are horrible. I hate to admit it, but this was kind of funny. Ignore the fact that Jim Duggan apparently has a working knowledge of the fuses in an arena in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Creative Control tells the Filthy Animals that they're fired if they don't produce Torrie. The Animals heed the threat and go find her. Wait

why isn't she with them in the first place?

Chavo Guerrero sells Duggan some fuses.

Vampiro/Misfits vs. Berlyn/The Wall

The Misfits almost have to be better than the Clowns. The Bodyguard is officially the Wall, which is more punny delight. Three are three Misfits and one is named Jerry Only. Berlyn goes after Vampiro to start and sends him flying with a belly to belly. He misses a dropkick though and it's off to the Misfits vs. the Wall. The trio is chokeslammed with ease but Vampiro comes in and kicks the Wall in the face.

The fans are way behind Vampiro here but Berlyn kicks him down, setting up a missile dropkick/suplex combo but the Germans argue over the pin. Wall steps aside so Vampiro can hit a quick Nail in the Coffin but Berlyn counters a top rope hurricanrana into a powerbomb. This time it's Wall breaking up the pin but Vampiro breaks it up, only to eat a chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D+. Most of that is because Wall hit some good looking chokeslams and the Misfits were little more than cannon fodder. This might have been the most logical match of the Russo Era so far with Berlyn getting annoyed at Wall for taking the glory, even though Berlyn is a waste of a roster spot at this point. Wall looks like someone they could push as someone interesting, meaning he's doomed from here.

Berlyn whips Vampiro post match.

Torrie has been brought to the Powers' office and Russo throws her a referee bikini, because "it's all about the ratings." Why did he have one of those handy?

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Sid Vicious

Rick is defending even though he didn't bring the belt with him. We continue a running theme tonight with the guys brawling in the aisle but this time Sid is sent over the barricade and into the crowd. Steiner slams him down on the concrete but Sid fights back, only to put on something like a chinlock near the stage. That goes nowhere so Rick is

dragged up to the stage for a low blow, setting up a powerbomb through the stage. Sid walks away and they never actually got into the ring. No match it would seem.

Post break, Rick is taken out on a stretcher. This goes on for the better part of ten minutes and Sid rambles about not wanting to do this to his friend. He's ready for Nash tonight.

Nash is taping up.

We go to the boiler room for Jerry Flynn vs. Barbarian in something resembling a match. Remember when Mankind and Undertaker did this? Or Big Show and Mankind? Well now it's Jerry Flynn beating up Barbarian, kicking him up against the wall and I guess knocking him out. Tony brags about how great this is going to be for the ratings and how it's going to make people watch the show.

Benoit says Scott Hall isn't standing in the way of getting to the World Title.

Asya vs. Kimberly

Torrie is guest referee and wearing a bikini. Well at least they're not hiding what they're doing anymore. Asya and Torrie get in a lame catfight until Kimberly jumps on Asya's back with a sleeper. The Animals come out to cover Torrie up and get her out of there. Cue David Flair with the crowbar and wearing a referee shirt, sending Kimberly running off. David and Asya fight with David shrugging off a low blow but the Revolution comes out to clear the ring. So a minute long non match had two guest referees (I guess?), and I believe five people interfering?

Sting is given some flowers with a card from Luger. Liz and Luger are shown hoping that he likes them, but Sting doesn't think he can trust them.

Goldberg has a chilled beverage.

Kimberly runs from David.

WCW World Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Chris Benoit vs. Scott Hall

Bret Hart comes out to be in Benoit's corner to counter Nash. So he's Hogan to Nash's Andre? Hall throws the toothpick at him and finds it hilarious. That earns him some fluid from Benoit's nose and they trade some arm holds. Now Hall wants the test of strength, only to pock Benoit in the eye. That's fine with Chris who trips Hall down and dropkicks him in the side of the head.

The Outsiders have a breather on the floor as this might be the longest match we've seen in Russo's Era without any shenanigans. Back in and they trade chops in the corner with Benoit taking over and getting two off a snap suplex. Nash can't help it any longer and nails Benoit in the back of the neck, allowing Scott to nail a clothesline for two. Scott gets into his routine and the fall away slam is good for two.

We hit the sleeper on the Canadian but Chris suplexes out to put both guys down. Benoit fights up and plants Hall with a backbreaker before dropkicking him to the floor. Nash goes after Benoit but Hart makes the save. In the melee, Sid comes in and powerbombs Hall, setting up the Swan Dive for two. Nash makes another save but Benoit Crossfaces Hall to go to Mayhem.

Rating: B-. Here's the interesting thing about the match and the key to the whole idea: the fans reacted when Sid came in and laid Hall out. Now why is this time different from all the other matches ending with interference? For me it's one simple reason: they allowed the match to build up before doing the angle. The only thing out of the ordinary was a single clothesline from Nash, which is minor by comparison. It's a good match on its own and the angle is far more acceptable when they have a good build to get there. This is the Russo style that worked in the WWF because it had the time to work, though that's not the case in WCW.

Bagwell says Jarrett isn't going over him.

WCW World Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Bret Hart vs. Kidman

Rey gets in on commentary. Bret takes him down with an elbow to the back of the head and nails a hard clothesline as this is looking one sided so far. Kidman slips out of a slam so Bret catapults him over the top and out to the floor. Back in and a Bodog gets two on Bret but we've got

Outsiders. They hit on the robed Torrie but Eddie goes over for the save as Rey cheers him on from commentary. Back inside, Bret counters a hurricanrana into the Sharpshooter.

Rating: D. This didn't have time to go anywhere but at least Bret didn't crush Kidman. It also helped that they kept things moving quick enough and the interference didn't really change much. Mysterio was kind of a jerk but the Animals are the worst face group in the history of wrestling so it's understandable.

Luger and Liz get some brownies. We're approaching bad sitcom territory.

Jeff Jarrett is the chosen one.

WCW World Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Jeff Jarrett vs. Buff Bagwell

They fight on the floor with Buff taking over and heading inside. Bagwell uses his standard offense including a good dropkick and an atomic drop until Creative Control comes out for a distraction. It doesn't work immediately though as Buff nails a powerslam, but the referee stops to tie his shoe. Creative Control comes in and breaks up the Blockbuster, only to have Buff nail the other with Jeff's guitar. The referee just can't stop looking at his shoes though and Jeff nails the Stroke for the pin from the suddenly alert referee.

Jeff and the referee hug because we needed an angle on a match that didn't break 130 seconds. Dustin Rhodes comes out for the save and celebrates with the loser.

Goldberg headbutts a Surge machine and gets a free drink.

Liz and Luger put laxatives in the brownies.

The Revolution is ready for the House of Pain match, but Saturn wants to talk about Everlast boxing gear and the music video for Jump Around. Saturn asks Dean to jump for him and staring abounds. I could get into this new character.

Duggan intercepts the brownies and says he deserves something like this.

Eddie Guerrero/Konnan vs. Perry Saturn/Dean Malenko

This is a House of Pain match, meaning it's inside a cage and you win by handcuffing both opponents to the ropes. Saturn superkicks Konnan before he can get inside, leaving Eddie to get double teamed. Tony cuts Heenan off and goes on a rant about internet marks thinking they can do his job. Oh I don't know Tony. I've seen a lot of internet marks that can sound every bit as stupid as you do.

The Revolution double teams Guerrero in the corner and pretty easily gets him most of the way chained up. Konnan comes in with some shots of his own but eats a spike piledriver. They complete shackling Eddie and Konnan gets the same just a few seconds later. Total time of a pretty big gimmick match like this: 2:57.

Rey comes in and gets laid out by a clothesline from Asya. The Revolution hangs him upside down from the top of the cage by the knee, allowing Malenko and Saturn to just destroy Rey's leg. His next match won't be until May. Well that explains why he didn't help Eddie earlier.

WCW World Title Tournament Quarter-Finals: Total Package vs. Sting

The winner gets Bret on Sunday. Luger (the announcers have forgotten the whole DON'T CALL HIM LEX LUGER schtick already) hides in the corner to start as he thought Sting would eat the brownies. Sting kicks him in the allegedly injured leg and stomps Lex down in the corner to take over. He takes it to the floor and stays on the leg (Luger: "HELP ME BOBBY!") before Lex gets inside to hide in the corner. An atomic drop does nothing to Sting but a clothesline gives Luger his first advantage.

Tony starts talking about how Sting and Luger have been friends for years in this sport before correcting himself by calling it a business. The Stinger Splash connects but Luger trips the referee while in the Scorpion. Liz maces Sting and the Torture Rack goes on, only to have Meng come out for a Tongan Death Grip (revenge for getting maced last week) to Luger. Meng puts Sting on top to send him to Mayhem.

Rating: D-. I'm getting tired of giving these matches the same grades over and over but they keep being the same bad, only slightly watchable

matches with some kind of interference and overbooked finishes. This was in the same category as it wasn't long enough to go anywhere but the guys know each other well enough to sleepwalk to a few acceptable moments.

Here are the final four:

Bret Hart

Sting

Chris Benoit

Jeff Jarrett

Jim Duggan feels the effects of the brownies.

Kevin Nash vs. Sid Vicious

Street fight. As has been the case almost all night, they start brawling in the aisle with Nash taking it into the crowd and hitting Sid low. They head back over the barricade and Nash hits the framed elbows in the corner. A quick clothesline sends Sid to the floor but he hits Nash low to take over again.

Back in and Sid slams Nash down and drops a leg for two. A leg between Nash's legs is our third low blow in four minutes. Sid calls for the powerbomb as the fans call for Goldberg. Cue Hall to break up the powerbomb and the Outsiders go after Sid. Goldberg comes out to clean house and the bell rings for a no contest in a street fight.

Rating: D-. So now we can't even get a finish in a match designed to not have a clean finish? I guess we're setting up some kind of a tag match in the future, but that hasn't been announced for Mayhem or any other show. On top of that, it would mean ignoring the months of Sid vs. Goldberg, which is one of those things in wrestling that always drives me insane. I'm sure in this WCW though, it's cutting edge TV.

Overall Rating: D. Here's the thing: for probably the first time since Russo took over, this show felt like it had a point. They have most of the big stuff set for Mayhem and gave you a reason to check out the show.

That alone puts it ahead of almost anything else WCW has done in weeks. However, that brings us to the problem with the show.

Other than Hall vs. Benoit, this was one of the worst wrestling shows I've seen in a very long time. The wrestling ranged from too short to mean anything to just flat out bad. However, it did have the best match Nitro has offered in weeks which somehow makes this a better show. I hate to say it, but this bad show is somehow an improvement.

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Smackdown Moving To USA In January 2016

That's quite the upgrade for them. It's also a good sign for WWE as NBC wants another show on a bigger network. SyFy never fit for a wrestling show anyway.

Monday Night Raw – April 6, 2015: The Three Headed Killing Machines

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 6, 2015

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

It's back to the regular style shows this week with Wrestlemania season wrapped up. The big story coming out of last week was Brock Lesnar's suspension, meaning we're not likely to see him again for a few months. In the meantime, we have Randy Orton challenging for the World Title at Extreme Rules, which is likely the focus of tonight's show. We also find out who is answering this week's open challenge for the US Title. Let's get to it.

Saxton is in for Cole on commentary.

We look at some stills of HHH vs. Sting.

The Authority is in the ring minus HHH and Stephanie. Rollins is booted out of the building but Big Show says the champion is trying to talk. Seth says the Authority is on vacation tonight before bragging about the attendance record, the number of people watching and the number of times they trended worldwide. That last part sounded so stupid. HHH put the final nail in WCW's coffin because the Authority always win. Big Show is officially the best giant of all time and Kane...well Kane was there too!

Show says everyone on this roster is under his shadow but the important thing is Wrestlemania ended with a new, honorable champion. Rollins again fails at coming up with something Kane did at Wrestlemania but before Kane can give his answer, here's Randy Orton to interrupt. Randy congratulates him on having his Wrestlemania moment. Of course it happened after a huge RKO took him out earlier in the night.

Rollins calls that complaining but Orton says he wants another shot, this time for the title. I'm pretty sure that match was already confirmed on Smackdown, or at least heavily implied. Orton asks Kane for the shot, and even asks if Kane needs to call mommy and daddy for permission. Kane demands respect and makes a three way match for the #1 contendership tonight between Orton, Reigns and Ryback. As usual, I had that typed before Kane even started because WWE is that predictable these days. However, Kane mixes things up a bit by saying all three of them have to compete in singles matches first.

Kane vs. Randy Orton

Randy gets to the middle rope to start and drives in some forearm to the chest, only to get caught by an uppercut to knock him to the floor. Back from a break with Kane stomping away but getting caught in the elevated DDT. They head outside with Orton nailing a clothesline, only to take a chair to the ribs for the DQ at 6:58. Not enough shown to rate but it was just a way to get to the storyline ending.

Post match Kane tries a chokeslam on the chair but Orton counters into an RKO attempt, sending Kane running.

The announcers bring up AJ retiring and show a tweet of her boots.

Brad Maddox is in Kane's office when Rollins comes in to yell at Kane. The priority is to protect Rollins, but for some reason Kane doesn't get that. Kane takes credit for Rollins winning Money in the Bank, so Rollins says Kane is going to have to answer to the Authority. That's fine with Kane, as he puts Rollins in a match tonight. For those of you counting, that would be five matches made during the show.

Cole is considering legal actions against Lesnar. JBL had to have emergency surgery for a torn abdomen wall and Booker wants Lesnar fired. Yay! Legal ramifications!

We look back at Lesnar's path of rage last week.

The WWE Network is free for April. That's the third free month out of six.

Seth Rollins vs. Neville

Non-title and Rollins is suddenly far less nervous. He grabs a mic and talks some trash to Neville, saying Neville must be terrified to be out here. Rollins has been there before too and offers the pipsqueak a chance to sit this one out. Neville kicks him in the ribs and we're ready to go. A quick armdrag puts the champ down but he stomps Neville in the corner to take over. Neville does his front flip out of the corner and hurricanranas Seth to the floor, setting up a big flip dive. He slides back in to avoid the Stooges and we take a break. Back with Neville being sent face first into the middle buckle and Seth dropping knees to the face.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Rollins picks him up for some knees to the ribs. Seth is toying with him as he drives some elbows into the head before putting on another chinlock. A running clothesline flips Neville inside out but he counters the buckle bomb with a hurricanrana. It's Red Arrow time but Mercury offers a distraction so Noble can break it up. Instead it's a quick rollup for two on Seth, who counters another hurricanrana into the buckle bomb. Curb Stomp ends Neville at 11:39.

Rating: C+. Let's get this out of the way right now: Neville is not buried, isn't being buried, and doesn't even have any dirt on him. If you need an explanation for why, I've failed at teaching you anything. This was a good showcase for Neville but there was no other logical way this could end without interference. The fact that Neville is in this spot two weeks in is a great sign for the future.

Rollins gives him another Curb Stomp after the match.

Here's Cena for this week's open challenge. The city of Austin has declared this WWE Day so Cena is extra fired up. A lot of fans want him to come out and lose the title already, but this title is a symbol of opportunity. Someone can come out here and have a chance to put their name in the history books. Take Rusev for example. He wants his rematch for the title, but for some reason he wants to wait until Extreme Rules. Why not have the match tonight in Austin? Anyway, someone can come out

here right now and step up to get stepped on.

US Title: John Cena vs. Stardust

Cena grabs a headlock to start and throws Stardust to the ropes, only to have him skin the cat. Back in and Cena drops some elbows as the announcers talk about Back to the Future for no logical reason. A delayed suplex gets two for the champ as Cena is mixing things up this week. The chinlock doesn't last long as Stardust bails to the floor and we take a break. Back with Cena diving into a dropkick and Stardust hitting something like Diamond Dust for two.

What looks to be a springboard hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb to give Cena a near fall of his own. The AA doesn't work so Stardust hooks an Alabama Slam for another two count. Cross Rhodes is countered as well and Cena plants him with a kind of sitout powerslam. The ProtoBomb looks to set up the Shuffle but Stardust kicks him in the head and gets another close cover off a DDT.

A moonsault press gets the same and Cena is in some trouble. It's not enough trouble though as he trips Stardust into the STF. Stardust is close to the ropes though and hits a quick Cross Rhodes for two. That's enough for Cena as he hits the springboard Stunner and the AA retains the title at 13:10.

Rating: C+. This is exactly what the open challenge should be doing: giving someone you don't usually see in a spot like this getting a chance to showcase themselves. Good match here with Stardust getting to show off a bit but ultimately coming up short. What I liked best about this match though: it was fresh. I'll take a match with an obvious ending over a match we've seen 19 times before almost every time.

Naomi/Paige vs. Bella Twins

The Bella Twins' name graphic now lists them both as Divas Champion. I know it's not intentional but it's probably more accurate than they intended. Brie takes Paige into the ropes to start and sends her to the floor for a hard shot from Nikki. The BRIE MODE knee gets two and we hit the chinlock.

Off to Nikki for a bodyscissors for a bit before Nikki misses a charge in the corner, allowing the hot tag to Naomi. She botches a spinning headscissors before kicking Nikki in the face before slipping on a landing out of the corner. The Rear View gets two with Brie making the save, only to have Paige kick Nikki down. The headscissors driver gets zero reaction but it's enough to pin Nikki at 5:00.

Rating: D-. Sweet Christmas the Bellas are dull in the ring. They're just not interesting no matter how you look at them and there's nothing in the ring that makes me want to watch them. It didn't help that Naomi was botching almost everything she was doing here and looked more like Cameron than anyone else. Horrible match that gave me flashbacks to the dark days of the division.

The announcers talk about Miz vs. Mizdow but we go to the Prime Time Players ripping on New Day with the same insults from Smackdown. They switch over to making fun of Ascension with some home made spiked shoulder pads that keep breaking. Ascension can't read either and they hit the Millions of Dollars dance. I've heard of worse gimmicks.

Luke Harper vs. Ryback

Harper nails a quick dropkick to start and a big boot sends Ryback to the floor. After teasing loading up the announcers' table, Harper takes him back inside for a Boss Man Slam and something like a crossface. Ryback gets the rope, avoids a charge to send Harper into the post and hits Shell Shock out of nowhere for the pin at 2:48. That was his only significant move of the match.

The New Day is hurt and disappointed by the crowd thinking they suck, but they won't find disappointment in their dancing. They clap or they snap. Big E. says he was eating at the airport yesterday when a kid came up and asked him (with Big E. doing a kid's voice) to sign a breakfast menu for his brother. Of course he could, because he claps. It really doesn't make more sense in context.

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

Kofi is on the floor this time but his slapping of the apron makes the

fans chant NEW DAYS SUCKS in time. Big E. runs Cara over to start and both he and Woods take turns stomping away in the corner. Cesaro/Kidd/Natalya are watching in the back as Woods gives up the hot tag to Kalisto. Things speed way up with Kalisto snapping off the hurricanrana but Big E. makes the save. Cara low bridges Big E. to the floor but Kofi gets in a cheap shot from the floor to give Woods two on Kalisto. Woods like the cheating but the Dragons make a blind tag, allowing the Salida Del Sol to set up the Swanton from Cara to pin Woods at 2:59.

Big Show vs. Roman Reigns

Because, uh, reasons! They slug it out to start with Show taking him into the corner for some chops. Show throws him across the ring by the vest and stands on his back on the ropes. They head outside with Show slowly plodding around and throwing Reigns into the barricade. Reigns comes back with a running apron kick but Show spears him down as we take a break. Back with Big Show still dominating because, uh, reasons!

Show charges into a boot in the corner and gets staggered by some clotheslines, only to catch Reigns in a side slam. The bouncing Vader Bomb gets two more and Show baseball slides him into the barricade. Reigns comes up to the apron and hammers away before Stunning Show over the apron. The Superman Punch from the floor sets up another in the ring. The third sets up the spear for the pin at 10:39.

Rating: D. I did not like this match. I am ceasing this rating description for reasons as an exercise in anger management due to a desire to not die at the age of 43, which is also Big Show's current age, which is usually when wrestlers retire but he's still out there getting to dominate people and for some reason WWE doesn't get that we don't care.

Kane is on the phone when a bunch of Divas come in to hit on him. They bring up the "Give Divas A Chance movement" (Alicia's finger quotes, not mine) and ask for a #1 contenders battle royal. Kane makes the match for next week to get rid of them.

Reigns says watch what he does next.

Here's Sheamus to say he looks like a real man. The fans tell him that he looks stupid but he says the grown up is talking now. He's a warrior who belongs here, unlike the go getters who just won't go away. People like Dolph Ziggler are insects who need to be crushed. Sheamus is told to pick on people his size, but there aren't too many his size. Cue his opponent.

Sheamus vs. Mark Henry

Henry is the hometown boy. Sheamus goes to leave but gets pulled back into the ring to start the fight. The bell rings and Henry blocks a kick with a right hand to the face. A top wristlock goes badly for Sheamus as he's shoved to the floor. Back up and Sheamus can't finish the ten forearms as Henry elbows him in the face, only to have Sheamus nail some knee lifts on the apron. The World's Strongest Slam is countered and Sheamus nails the Brogue Kick for the pin at 2:33. Booker calls Sheamus a viking for no apparent reason.

We look at the big talking segment from Wrestlemania.

Bray Wyatt shows up on screen and says someone's entire life revolves around dedication. However dedicated you are, you can't compete with the forces of nature. You can't compete against fear either, for it is not your drive for success that motivates you. What motivates you is fear and it holds the key to your undoing. Does he have your attention now? Behold the new face of fear.

Ryback is hungry for the WWE World Title.

Damien Mizdow vs. Miz

We get a battle of sunglasses removal to start but Mizdow knocks him to the floor before taking his off. Back in and Mizdow chokes him in the corner but eats a big boot to the face. Mizdow shoves him to the corner but doesn't seem that comfortable on offense. A snap suplex and knee drop keep Miz in trouble. Mizdow scores with an electric chair and headbutt, followed by the Reality Check for no cover. Miz tries a low blow but gets taken down and punched in the face. A quick rollup with a handful of trunks is enough to pin Mizdow at 5:03.

Rating: D+. This show is going WAY too long and it's starting to drag horribly. It's pretty clear that this match was designed to set up a gimmick rematch, maybe for the rights to the name and the music, at Extreme Rules. Nothing much to see here though, other than Mizdow looking awkward on offense at times.

Orton has nothing against his opponents but he's winning tonight.

Ryback vs. Roman Reigns vs. Randy Orton

Winner gets the title shot at Extreme Rules. Ryback tries to Shell Shock Reigns seconds in but gets taken down by Orton's backbreaker for two. A clothesline gets the same on Reigns but Ryback throws Orton to the floor. Cue the Authority on the stage, where they can see Ryback powerslam Reigns. Roman breaks up the elevated DDT on Ryback before clotheslining him in the corner. There's a Superman Punch to Orton but Ryback plants Reigns with a spinebuster.

The Meat Hook puts Reigns down again but Ryback has to stop Orton with a spinebuster as well. Reigns breaks up Shell Shock on Orton with a spear and all three are down. Now the Authority starts coming to the ring but Reigns dives on all of them. Show KO Punches him though, only to have Rollins go after Orton. Cue the Stooges to go after Orton but Ryback beats them up. The RKO on Ryback sends Orton to Extreme Rules at 5:18.

Rating: C. This didn't have time to go anywhere but it wasn't bad while it lasted. I'm getting back into Ryback but there was almost no way Orton didn't win here. Unfortunately it really seems that they're setting up Reigns vs. Big Show again, despite the interest just not being there. That never stopped them before though.

Rollins hits a Curb Stomp before we can hear what the voices do in Orton's head.

Overall Rating: C-. This show was more good than bad but it really started dragging at about 10:30. At the end of the day, three hours is just too long for a single wrestling show every week. It doesn't help that a lot of the talent was working twice tonight and we had more than one Divas segments. The stuff with the new guys or the new characters was

good, but they really need to get away from Big Show and the Bellas. Those three are just crippling whatever scenes they're in and the fans aren't going to lighten up on them anytime soon. Watchable show this week but it needed to be half an hour shorter.

Results

Randy Orton b. Kane via DQ when Kane used a chair

Seth Rollins b. Neville – Curb Stomp

John Cena b. Stardust – Attitude Adjustment

Naomi/Paige b. Bella Twins – Headscissors driver to Nikki

Ryback b. Luke Harper – Shell Shock

Lucha Dragons b. New Day – Swanton Bomb to Woods

Roman Reigns b. Big Show – Spear

Sheamus b. Mark Henry – Brogue Kick

Miz b. Damien Mizdow – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Randy Orton b. Ryback and Roman Reigns – RKO to Ryback

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