

Tribute to the Troops 2013: They Deserve Better

Tribute to the Troops 2013

Date: December 28, 2013

Location: Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Tacoma, Washington

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

It's the annual holiday tradition but things are being scaled back a bit this year. Instead of the two hour edition on USA, we're only getting the hour long show on NBC. This was taped a few weeks back, before TLC, meaning there are still two world champions. There will also be concerts and some standup comedy to fill in the time. Let's get to it.

As always, the ratings will be lighter than usual as the matches aren't meant to be taken as seriously.

The arena looks very different with a huge plane over the entrance and no Titantron.

We get a history package of WWE visiting the troops over the years. This includes shots of soldiers surprising their families by coming home which are always cool.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Bryan has an awesome goat with wings shirt. This is a pretty big match for a holiday special. Bray hits his low running cross body to take over and slugs Bryan down in the corner. A LOUD YES chant starts up and Bray mocks the arm motion in a funny bit. Bryan comes back with the moonsault out of the corner and the running clothesline to set up the YES Kicks. The Swan Dive gets two and here are Harper and Rowan in for the DQ at 1:45.

Before the triple beating can go down, here's Punk for the save. Punk sends the Family to the floor and hits a suicide dive to take them both down. Vickie comes out and makes a tag match.

Daniel Bryan/CM Punk vs. Wyatt Family

Bray is the man on the floor here. This is joined in progress after a break with Bryan getting taken down by a Rowan elbow to the jaw. Off to Harper as we get to one of the best parts of this show: the crowd. They are into EVERYTHING and act like a 1980s crowd. We get a look at the plane over the entrance and see that it's a real plane rather than a prop.

Rowan comes back in for an elbow drop for two before cranking on the neck. A fallaway slam sends Bryan flying but he misses a splash, allowing for the hot tag to Punk. CM speeds things up with all of his usual stuff and takes Rowan down with a neckbreaker. The GTS is loaded up but Bray comes in for the DQ at 2:50 shown.

I think you know what's coming. After a run-in and another Vickie appearance, here's the payoff:

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/CM Punk vs. Wyatt Family

This is joined in progress with Bray doing his upside down in the corner look at Punk before tagging in Harper for a chinlock. Cena is drawn in as Harper gets two off a suplex and Rowan hits a quick backbreaker to keep Punk down. Back to Wyatt but Punk shoves him away and hits a high cross body, setting up the hot tag to Cena. John initiates the finishing sequence on Harper but can't get him up in the AA. Instead it's the STF but Rowan breaks it up as everything breaks down. Wyatt and Rowan are sent to the floor and it's a GTS, running knee and AA (do they want to kill him???) for the pin on Harper at 3:55.

Rating: C. This was exactly what it was supposed to be: building up to the conclusion that the fans wanted to see and then delivering it. The three heroes hitting the finishers in a row for the pin on a monster is as good as you're going to get for something like this. Also thank goodness they didn't pin Wyatt here.

Bruce Willis loves the troops.

Ryan Seacrest loves the troops.

Michelle Beadle, the host for the night, joins us about half an hour into the show to interview the base's commander. This is about what you would expect it to be.

Santino introduces Daughtry for a few songs.

Fandango vs. R-Truth

Fast paced feeling out process to start with Truth thrusting his hips and taking Fandango down with a hiptoss. A side kick takes Fandango down again and the sitout front suplex gets two. Fandango gets sent to the apron but comes back with an enziguri. Not that it matters as he walks into Little Jimmy for the pin at 1:48.

Alec Baldwin loves the troops.

Will Ferrell loves the troops and talks like Ron Burgandy.

The Bellas introduce Jeff Dunham.

Dunham and his puppets do a Christmas themed set until Big Show interrupts for even more bad jokes.

Big Show vs. Damien Sandow

Sandow tells us just how stupid this show has been on his way to the ring. It's a comedy match with Big Show laughing at Sandow for trying any offense and giving him a Stinkface for good measure. We get the loud chops, some shoulder blocks and a chokeslam sets up the WMD for the pin at 2:03.

The locker room comes out to celebrate to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. This was AWFUL and by far the worst of these things they've ever done. There was no effort put into this show at all and I'm going to forget about it in about 30 minutes. It felt like they had a house show, put up some flags and called it Tribute to the troops. They didn't even do a Divas match for the sake of good looking women in small outfits. Those are too racy now too? Just a horrible show that felt like a pat on the back to WWE instead of ANYTHING about the troops at all.

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2013 Awards: Title Reign of the Year

I believe this has the most options. I'll go through some nominees as usual.

Bully Ray. Ray won the title in a moment that didn't surprise many people, but his title reign went well for the most part. The biggest thing lacking was major title defenses, though it's not fair to blame that on Ray. On top of that, it was pretty clear that he was losing the belt at BFG no matter what.

Dean Ambrose. This started off promisingly but turned into the same midcard title reign you see every time.

Shield. Now we get into some of the interesting stuff. This is a good example of a title reign that started and ended well, with Shield looking dominant up until their reign, looking dominant in their reign, and losing the titles in an awesome match. This is probably second on my list.

Rhodes Brothers. The problem here is similar to Ambrose: too many losses. Despite an amazing title win and some great defenses, the Brothers keep losing matches that they shouldn't be losing, presumably leading to a split and Goldust vs. Cody match at Wrestlemania because someone said that was a good idea years ago and that's what we're getting, great tag team or not.

I'm going to leave out Del Rio and Orton's reigns as neither of them did anything for me at all. Del Rio is just dull and Orton spent his time being handed the title back over and over. Cena's title reigns were really nothing all that special either.

Actually I'm going with AJ Lee. This is a rare occurrence of someone cleaning out of a division and having no one left to challenge her. She even has her moment with the Total Divas promo and has made me cheer for her every time she's made one of those nitwits (or Natalya) tap out. She's closing in on the record for longest Divas Title reign and has looked dominant (and cute) while doing so. It's AJ by a few

touchdowns.

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Thunder – August 5, 1998: Stealing Nitro's Bad Ideas

Thunder

Date: August 5, 1998

Location: Casper Events Center, Casper, Wyoming

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Lee Marshall, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

It's the go home show for Road Wild which means we're probably in line for about 174 Tonight Show clips in the next two hours. We might even get to hear some new matches announced for the show as I think we have three at the moment. I'm so glad Thunder came back for such a great occasion. Let's get to it.

This is the first episode since mid-July if you're trying to read these in order.

We open on the announcers talking about the big tag match. Also you get to see a Travis Tritt concert if you buy the show. There might even be some wrestling on the side.

Goldberg is officially in the battle royal.

We look at Sting in the white paint as he's back to what he was in 1997.

We also look at the NWO shouting at Kimberly while Page got beaten up. That's still a little disturbing.

Giant vs. Lizmark Jr.

The match is over before I finish writing the names via the chokeslam.

Giant thinks Goldberg is on a roll and has won the title but Giant is the real future of wrestling. He wants a piece of Goldberg at some point in the future.

Video package on Goldberg.

Here's Luger, rocking that sweet wolf's head shirt, with something to say. After some sucking up to the crowd, he says that Wolfpack is more than just for life; it's forever. For the first time since probably 1993, we get a LUGER chant. We get the answer to the question that people were supposed to be asking since Monday: who attacked him in the back. The only face Luger saw before he went down was Scott Hall, so he's not leaving until there's an NWO battle tonight. Sting (in red and black like he was before Monday) and Konnan come out and stand beside their stablemate and it's posing all around.

Dean Malenko comes out to referee the next match but Jericho cuts him off. He knows Dean must have sucked up to a lot of people to get the job on Sunday but Jericho knows Malenko doesn't have the integrity to call a fair match at Road Wild. Dean better call the next match fair or else.

Juventud Guerrera vs. Psychosis

Juvy takes over early by going up top for a flying headscissors and a clothesline to drop the masked man for two. Psychosis comes back with a clothesline of his own and gets a boot up in the corner to drop Juvy. Guerrera grabs a Juvy Driver out of nowhere for a near fall as Dean hasn't been a factor so far. Something resembling a powerbomb gets two for Psychosis but Juvy monkeyflips him out to the floor because selling isn't allowed in most cruiserweight matches. While Dean checks on Psychosis on the floor, Jericho comes in to blast Juvy with the title

belt. A guillotine legdrop forces Dean to count a reluctant pin.

Rating: C-. Some nice highspots aside, would anyone like to explain to me the logic of having your #1 contender for the Cruiserweight Title lose back to back TV matches the week before his title shot? If you want Dean to cost Jericho the title, why not just have him take the title himself?

And now....oh good grief they're doing NWO Nightcap on Thunder now. Let's make this quick: Leno jokes, Eubanks jokes, Kimberly sleeps around....and here's DDP to DIVE at Bischoff and choke him until the set is destroyed. Cops pull Page off and Giant carries Bischoff's carcass to the back. At least they kept it under ten minutes this time and that dive was great.

Let's take a breather here and talk about something: how are these Nightcap segments supposed to make me want to buy a show? The idea is simple of course: Bischoff makes fun of Leno, Leno should want to get revenge. That's where the good idea (a stretch on its own) stops. How many people are going to want to pay to see that and how many people are going to think that's the dumbest idea they've ever heard? They might watch it for free on the Tonight Show, but asking them to pay \$30 and pay for something they know will be goofy?

Hogan isn't here but saw what happened and is coming. With his biker buddies. Oh dear. Just oh dear. Wait if he wasn't at the show, why was he in Casper?

Meng vs. Jim Duggan

They slug it out with Duggan throwing his big overblown right hands and Meng looking like he's having a seizure. A kick to the chest puts Duggan down but he pops back to his feet for a double clothesline. Not that it matters as Hugh Morrus and Barbarian come in for the no contest.

Duggan cleans house with the 2x4 and Meng chases Morrus and Barbarian to the back.

Here's the NWO Black and White (read as Hall and goons) with something to say. Hall makes jokes about the Nitro Girls before turning his attention to the Wolfpack. Luger likes to get beaten up, Konnan is a jumping bean

that will get squashed like a cockroach and Sting can't decide what color to paint his face. The challenge for tonight is accepted.

TV Title: Steve McMichael vs. Stevie Ray

Ray is defending. Mongo is all ticked off and storms the ring, only to get choked down into the corner. A jumping kick to the chest puts McMichael down but he comes back with a belly to back suplex. Mongo hits a few three point charges to put Ray down again, only to charge into an elbow in the corner. Here's Chavo with a piece of paper saying he's made himself the champion just like Stevie. Ray goes after him for the countout. Mongo was basically squashed here but he still doesn't get why Arn doesn't want the Horsemen back.

Chavo clocks Stevie with the belt and Mongo gets in some cheap shots. Ray whips Mongo into the barricade to make sure McMichael doesn't look good at all and chases after Guerrero.

Tony brings out Rick Steiner to talk about what happened on Monday. Rick wants to beat up Scott and Buff so badly that he yells until Tony has to bring him back to reality. This time it's personal and Rick wants to fight Scott man to man on Saturday.

Raven talks about controlling Kanyon and how this Sunday will be a handicap match against Saturn. Instead of a triple threat tonight, Saturn gets a handicap match.

Saturn vs. Riggs/Sick Boy

Saturn beats both guys up like the jobbers they are and stomps on Lodi's broken fingers. The Flock members finally get it together and double team Saturn down. Riggs hits a nice side slam and brings in Sick Boy, only to have Saturn superkick him in the jaw. Riggs is knocked off the apron and Saturn ends Sick Boy quick with the Death Valley Driver.

Buy some motorcycle!

Disco Inferno vs. Eddie Guerrero

Tokyo is with Disco and comes out to Alex Wright's music. Eddie gets in a

cheap shot to start and a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gets two. Disco comes right back with an early piledriver and a spinning neckbreaker for two each. A middle rope fist drop misses Eddie though and he takes Disco's head off with an elbow to the jaw. Guerrero botches something resembling a shoulder breaker but plants Disco with a brainbuster. In a nice ending, Eddie goes up for the Frog Splash but Tokyo shoves him off, only to have Eddie land right on Disco with the splash anyway. Too short to rate but it's another nothing match in a series tonight.

Buff Bagwell calls in and says Rick Steiner is stupid until Rick comes to the announcers' table. Apparently that chair shot on Monday injured Scott so badly that he can't wrestle at Road Wild. Rick offers to fight both of them anyway.

Clip from the Tonight Show.

Here are Hogan, Disciple and Bischoff for their final rant before Sunday. This show has sapped every ounce of energy I have so we'll make this quick: Hogan knows a bunch of bikers, Kimberly was on the back of his bike coming here, he's going to break every bone in Leno and Page's bodies, Bischoff is going to take over the late night scene and he's ordered the caskets for Sunday. That somehow took over five minutes. Oh and Hogan had no bikers with him, unless Disciple counts.

NWO Wolfpack vs. NWO Black and White

It's Hall/Adams/Hennig vs. Sting/Luger/Konnan. We come back from a break and the brawl is on quickly. Everyone fights on the floor with the Wolfpack taking over. Luger and Hall finally get in the ring to get things going with Lex hitting his array of atomic drops. Off to Hennig who gets shoved into the corner over and over so all three members of the Wolfpack can get in some cheap shots.

Konnan comes in to face Adams and walks into a backbreaker for two. The Black and White triple teams Konnan for a bit, resulting in a tag off to Hennig for some knee lifts. The fans chant for the Wolfpack and Sting gets the hot tag to clean house. Everything breaks down and Konnan gets a Tequila Sunrise on Adams but Hennig makes a save. Not that it matters though as Konnan rolls Adams up for the pin a second later.

Rating: D. Just a match here to set up the battle royal on Saturday, even though it leaves out the people of interest in the battle royal. They did a decent job about making the match feel like a melee but that doesn't mean it's an interesting match. This was your usual throw everybody else into the main event to close out the show match.

Overall Rating: D. This company is dreadful right now with the Hogan vs. Hollywood stuff dragging everything else down. Thankfully the story isn't going to last much longer, but it's made the last few weeks nearly unwatchable. The PPV is a two match show at best, even though one of the matches is a battle royal to combine two feuds into one. Why that's needed on a PPV as empty as Road Wild is beyond me but I'm sure it somehow makes Hogan a bigger star or something like that.

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TNA DVDs Free On Youtube, Pick One For Me To Review

This appears to be for this weekend only so check it out while you can.

<http://www.impactwrestling.com/news/item/5360-TNA-on-YouTube-Free-Review-Weekend-Watch-Select-Classic-Compilation-Releases-For-Free>

Here's what you can check out:

Champion: The Best Of Kurt Angle
Return Of An Icon: The Best Of Sting
The Best of the Asylum Years
TNA 50 Greatest Moments
The Best of the X Division, Volumes 1 and 2
Global Impact: TNA Versus New Japan
The Best of Tag Teams
Second 2 None : The Best of Tag Teams Volume 2
Motor City Machine Guns versus Beer Money
TNA :The Ultimate Matches
The Best of the Bloodiest Brawls
Nevermore The Best of Raven
Unstoppable: The Best of Samoa Joe
I'll even throw in a bonus. I'll review any of these you guys pick (assuming it has matches). First to three votes wins.

Smackdown – December 27, 2013: Cena Steals Another Show

Smackdown

Date: December 27, 2013

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

It's the final blue show of the year and I don't remember anything being announced on Raw. The main story from Monday was Big E.

Langston/Cena/Punk running off the Shield after being them for the DQ, meaning it's payback time tonight. We're getting closer to the Rumble and have less than 100 days until Wrestlemania so the times are getting exciting. Let's get to it.

Here's Cena to get things going. After looking at a clip of the end of

Raw, Cena says the last Smackdown of the year is even more important than that. Tonight the WWE Universe is going to ring in the new year so we need NOISE. They have to have fun tonight because after the new year everyone has to worry about new year's resolutions.

Cena would like to give a bear hug to a real bear or star in a 1-800-Fella commercial or land the lead role in a musical production of No Holds Barred (dead silence on that line) or make a hip hop album with Great Khali (lukewarm) or reboot an animated Manimal series with Michael Cole in the lead role or, and only if he has time, get started early on his XFL fantasy team (nice chuckle).

There's one other thing he wants to do: gain forty pounds. Luckily for him he doesn't have to wait for the new year because the WWE World Heavyweight Championship weighs about forty pounds and he has a rematch clause. If Orton is listening he can get out here right now but instead here's Shield. They surround the ring and easily take Cena down but here's Mark Henry for the save. When that doesn't work, Big E. Langston comes out for the real save to clear the ring. Kane comes out on stage and makes three singles matches for tonight: Langston vs. Ambrose (non-title), Reigns vs. Henry and Rollins vs. Cena.

Usos vs. Wyatt Family

Before the match we get a clip of the Family throwing Bryan off a ledge last week. The Usos send the monsters to the floor and Jey takes Rowan down with a dive. Jimmy gets two off a rollup to Harper and a Whisper in the Wind gets the same. Rowan makes a blind tag and takes Jimmy's head off with a clothesline. A splash is enough to pin Jimmy in just 1:10.

Post match Bray gives Jey Sister Abigail.

Renee Young asks Randy Orton if he has any new year's resolutions. Orton says he's beaten everyone else in the company so maybe he'll win the Royal Rumble so he can spend Wrestlemania in a skybox writing his Hall of

Fame introduction speech. Ziggler comes up and says he'll shut Orton up tonight. Orton promises an RKO until Kane comes in to make the match for later. Ziggler leaves and Kane says backstage must be a safe zone, but out there anything goes.

Cody Rhodes vs. Antonio Cesaro

Colter's sign this week: "Press 1 for English, press 2 for INS." Cesaro is now residing in the US. This is fallout from Main Event when Cody went after Cesaro for interfering in a Swagger vs. Goldust match. Cody grabs a headlock to start as the announcers talk about Kane being the eyes and ears of the Authority tonight. Cody takes Cesaro to the mat and then out to the floor where Goldust gives Antonio a deep breath.

Back in and Cesaro punches Cody in the jaw and kicks him out to the floor. After a Goldust staredown leads nowhere, Cesaro takes Rhodes back inside for a pummeling in the corner. Cody quickly breaks out of a chinlock and comes back with a front suplex for two but a Swagger distraction lets Cesaro get in a cheap shot and a rollup for the pin at 4:11.

Rating: D+. Another match that changes nothing as we wait for the title match that may never come. I'm not a fan of champions losing but at least this was a singles match instead of yet another tag loss. On the good side though, Cesaro getting a pin in a singles match is a nice thing to see and hopefully the first of many.

Prime Time Players vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

I refuse to refer to them as "Rybaxel." Ryback pounds on Young to start but Darren scores with a right hand to the jaw and a dropkick to the knee. Off to Titus for the front suplex to Darren onto Ryback for no cover. A hard shoulder puts Ryback down but Axel gets in a knee to O'Neil's back to take him down. Curtis chokes him in the corner ("BARK LIKE A DOG!") before it's quickly back to Ryback for a front facelock.

The heels take turns on O'Neil in the corner with Axel slapping him in the back of the head, only to run into a big boot. Darren gets the tag and scores with an overhead belly to belly on Axel before getting two off a northern lights suplex. Everything breaks down and Ryback is clotheslined to the floor, allowing Young to pin Axel at 4:51.

Rating: D+. The underlying problems with the tag division continues: it doesn't matter if you build up teams if the teams are boring and keep trading meaningless wins with no advancement in sight. This match doesn't change anything for either team and doesn't move the Players up towards a title program, at least not anytime soon.

We get a clip from the 50 Years of WWE DVD focusing on Saturday Night's Main Event.

Randy Orton vs. Dolph Ziggler

Another non-title match. Ziggler now has a streak of pink hair which leaves JBL stunned. Dolph gets taken into the corner but comes back with a shot to the jaw to send the champion out to the floor. Back in and Orton headlocks him down and takes Ziggler's head off with a clothesline. Dolph comes back with right hands in the corner and the big jumping elbow for two. I guess the ten elbow drops spot is long gone.

Orton pulls Ziggler face first into the middle buckle to take over again and walks around very slowly. He walks around too long though and Ziggler gets in a dropkick, sending Orton to the floor and us to a break. Back with Orton stomping away on a fallen Ziggler. Randy puts on a reverse chinlock for a bit but Ziggler gets out with a jawbreaker. Dolph pounds away in the corner and scores with a neckbreaker before getting two off a neckbreaker.

The Fameasser misses but Ziggler avoids the powerslam and gets two off a jumping DDT. Dolph gets crotched on the top but breaks up a superplex attempt. A bad looking missile dropkick gets two and Orton is sent

shoulder first into the post (same thing Orton did to him during a break). A bulldog gets two for Ziggy but Orton pokes him in the eye and RKOs Zigler for the pin at 13:20.

Rating: B-. I like the ending with Orton taking the easy way out again, just like Cena accused him of doing leading up to TLC. The match was the usual good stuff from these guys as they've shown that they have chemistry. Zigler getting to show off a little bit is much better than seeing him in nothing matches against Fandango.

Post match Orton takes Zigler outside and gives him the Elevated DDT off the barricade.

Shield says they'll win all their matches tonight. Cena vs. Rollins sounds promising.

Daniel Bryan vs. Damien Sandow

JBL wants to know why there was a good Santa and a bad Santa on Monday. Cole: "That's the way the story was written?" JBL: "WHAT KIND OF AN ANSWER IS THAT???" Bryan fires off some kicks in the corner to start followed by some knees to the ribs to put Sandow down. Damien comes back with some forearms to the back and sends Daniel out to the floor. The Russian legsweep sets up the Wind-Up Elbow for two and we hit the crossface chickenwing. Back up and Bryan hits the running clothesline and dropkick in the corner to set up the top rope hurricanrana. The YES Kicks set up the running knee for the pin at 4:01.

Rating: D+. Just a quick win here for Bryan in the kind of matches I wouldn't mind seeing more of. Well, more of as long as the opponents change every now and then and we don't have to sit through the same pairing every week. Sandow doesn't lose anything here as he's not ready to beat someone on Bryan's level so there's nothing bad in this whole thing.

Post match Bray appears on stage and says he realizes that Bryan is the one the people want. That means Bray has to destroy him.

Dean Ambrose vs. Big E. Langston

Neither title is on the line. In addition to the other Shield members, Cena and Henry are both at ringside as well. Langston shoves Ambrose into the corner to start and drives shoulders into the ribs but gets clotheslined down. Dean pounds away with rights and lefts on the mat before hitting the running dropkick against the ropes.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Ambrose goes up top, only to be slammed down like a ham sandwich being thrown off a cliff. A belly to belly puts Ambrose down again but he sends Langston to the floor for a standoff. No brawling ensues and Ambrose throws Langston back inside, only to have the big man run Dean over, setting up the Big Ending for the pin at 2:46. That was close. I thought they wouldn't have Ambrose job clean again before the year was out.

Reigns comes in for the showdown with Langston but Henry moves Big E. out of the way.

Mark Henry vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns wants a test of strength to start but headbutts Henry instead. A hard clothesline sends Reigns to the floor and a headbutt from Henry puts him down. Back in and a big boot to the jaw puts Reigns down as the slow pace continues. Roman snaps Henry's throat across the top rope and gets two off the Superman Punch. We hit a chinlock on Henry for a bit but he comes back with the JYD headbutts. Reigns will have nothing to do with that jive turkey nonsense and lifts Henry up for a Samoan drop. Another Superman Punch and the spear are good for the pin on Mark at 4:01.

Rating: D. Reigns looked good but he had to work through a lot of Mark

Henry suck. It's a good sign that he's pinning former world champions clean in four minutes though. There's a BIG future for Reigns and the fact that these wins are becoming more and more natural are telling signs for him.

John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

There's a lot of time left for this. Cena quickly takes him down and works on a hammerlock. Back up and Cena sends Seth to the floor with a hiptoss for a meeting with Shield. Back in and Rollins gets in some shots to knock Cena into the corner. Rollins blocks a bulldog and drops a knee for two before putting on a cobra clutch of all things. Cena tries to fight out and gets caught in a one arm camel clutch, only to fight up and drive Rollins into the corner to escape.

Rollins gets a boot up in the corner to stop a charging John and gets two off a neckbreaker as we take a break. Back with Rollins firing off right hands to the jaw. Cena is sent into the corner but he reverses a whip into the corner to put both guys down again. John tries a comeback but gets caught in a quick Downward Spiral into the middle buckle. Rollins does You Can't See Me but Cena counters a neckbreaker into the ProtoBomb and hits the Shuffle. Rollins flips out of the AA and hits a Buff Blockbuster (that's a finisher that needs to be pulled out of mothballs) for two.

Cena gets taken down by a Stinger Splash but avoids the second attempt. He grabs a half nelson and lifts Rollins up before spinning into what was supposed to be a neckbreaker. Cena landed a foot or so away from Rollins but luckily the move could have passed for a half nelson slam. Rollins kicks out at two so Cena goes up, only to get knocked down to the mat.

The standing Sliced Bread #2 gets another near fall for Seth but Cena comes back with a Batista Bomb (not gimmick infringement just yet) for two. Cena tries to pull Rollins away from the ropes but Seth lands on his feet again and hits a jumping enziguri for a VERY close two. Rollins gets

the same off a top rope knee to the face and the frustration sets in. The Black Out (running curb stomp) is countered in the STF but Rollins is into the ropes before too much damage can be done.

Ambrose tries to come in but gets picked off by Langston before he can make any contact. Dean is thrown over the announce table but Reigns hits a running clothesline to drop Langston. Henry throws Reigns onto Ambrose as Cena rolls through Rollins' cross body into the AA for the pin at 17:40.

Rating: B+. I was digging the heck out of this match and I was so glad that the ending wasn't a DQ. Rollins looked outstanding in there as he continues to prove his worth once the Shield breaks up. I could see him being the next Kofi Kingston, having awesome matches with anyone they put him out there with but never getting the big break. That's not a bad career to have at all.

Overall Rating: B-. This took some time to get going and the main event was by far the best part of the show. The first half of the show is only ok but the Orton vs. Ziggler match along with Rollins vs. Cena more than make up for it. This was using the old formula of wrestling on Smackdown and that's what was needed after a more entertainment based Raw. It's a nice way to close out the year and hopefully a good way to get us into 2014.

Results

Wyatt Family b. Usos – Splash to Jimmy

Antonio Cesaro b. Cody Rhodes – Rollup

Prime Time Players b. Ryback/Curtis Axel – Rollup to Axel

Randy Orton b. Dolph Ziggler – RKO

Daniel Bryan b. Damien Sandow – Running knee

Big E. Langston b. Dean Ambrose – Big Ending

Roman Reigns b. Mark Henry – Spear

John Cena b. Seth Rollins – AA

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2013 Awards: Most Improved

This one took some time. One of the most common choices I see for this is Magnus and I really don't get why. He's improved somewhat but it's really more that he's been pushed more than gotten better. The same holds true for Roman Reigns, who has been the explosive power guy of Shield the entire time but has been pushed as a major force over the last few months.

If we're talking about someone who got much better, look no further than NXT Champion Bo Dallas. This guy started off the year as one of the only acts on NXT that made me want to fast forward but the heel turn changed everything. Now that Dallas is just S0 over the top that it's hard not to love him. The reaction when he loses the title is going to be off the charts and that's why the character works so well. Also getting rid of that spear and switching to the bulldog was a great change.

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On This Day: December 27, 2012 – Impact Wrestling: Tale Of The Battling Heels

Impact Wrestling

Date: December 27, 2012

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Todd Keneley, Tazz

Hey it's Open Fight Night, BECAUSE WE JUST HAD A FREAKING GIMMICK SHOW LAST WEEK! Pay no attention to the fact that these shows never accomplish anything and the ratings keep going down, because clearly these stupid gimmicks are the only thing holding them up as high as they go. The show will likely be fine but man alive I don't care about this Open Fight thing. Let's get to it.

After the usual opening recap, here's Bully Ray with something to say. He realizes he and Hogan can't get along because Hogan won't trust him. Tonight, he's calling Hulk out for a talk rather than a fight. The music plays but there's no Hulk. Instead we get Brooke who says Hulk isn't here. We get the melodramatic promo from Brooke about how someone had a camera or something because Hulk knows. DOES NO ONE WATCH THEIR OWN TV SHOWS ANYMORE??? Ray denies anything exists and leaves with Brooke trying to talk sense into him.

Here's Aries who doesn't care what the fans think of him. He'll win the title back soon but tonight, he's going to be in the main event against Roode for costing him the title last week.

Samoa Joe calls out the hammer guy from Aces and 8's and promises to take his mask.

Samoa Joe vs. Masked Man

Joe pounds away to start but gets beaten down in the corner. The masked guy (I believe Mike Knox) hits the running crotch attack in 619 position but misses a charge in the corner. Joe tries the MuscleBuster but gets kicked away. There's the Clutch instead and the masked guy is out at 2:56.

Joe goes for the mask but the rest of the bikers come in for the save. Of course they do.

Robbie E and Jesse have a Dude/Bro off. I'm strangely intrigued by this. The challenge is for a Bro Off later rather than a match of course.

Kenny King tells Christian York to watch tonight and maybe he'll get an X Title match.

It's time for the Bro Off, which has three rules: every bro for himself, you have to end everything in bro...and the third rule isn't listed. Apparently this is a dance off. Scratch that as Robbie dances and Jesse poses. Jesse presses Tara over his head but apparently it's Bros and not Hoes, so Robbie wins by DQ. Robbie T says that's not it because he's in this too. He poses as well before pressing Robbie E over his head. T also fist pumps, backflips, does one handed pushups and humps the mat. The look on E and Jesse's faces are HILARIOUS. T wins apparently.

Van Dam, looking higher than I've ever seen him, calls out Christian York instead of Kenny King.

Christian York vs. Rob Van Dam

Feeling out process to start with both guys missing some strikes. York hits a half nelson suplex to take over and a kick to Van Dam's back to follow up. A rana sends Van Dam to the outside and a missile dropkick back inside for no cover. The Mood Swing (Eve's rolling neckbreaker) gets two as does a kick out of the corner from York. York hits a top rope double stomp to the back for two but misses a charge in the corner. Van

Dam hits a split legged moonsault for two and Rolling Thunder for no cover. Five Star gets the pin at 4:03.

Rating: C. Nice spot fest here but literally that's it. There was nothing between these moves which gets really annoying really fast. York is a guy who they're at least making look competent, which is all you can ask for with a new guy like him. Also at least there's something to look at, unlike the other Gut Check people who never show up again.

D-Von talks about getting someone new to join the club. Doc is with some girls and approves of the plan.

We get a package on Joseph Park in OVW. Park: "I'm setting the bar for training." Danny Davis: "He's dumber than a box of rocks." We get the clip of Park morphing into Abyss which was the potential that Davis was looking for.

Bad Influence goes to make sure they don't have any merchandise on sale. They have a post-Christmas present for everyone.

Remember to vote for Superstar of the Year.

Roode says he's winning tonight and getting the title back at Genesis.

Sting is still going to be back on 1-3-13.

Daniels dances out to the ring and says greetings and salutations to all you ham sandwiches. He's the reason AJ hasn't been around anymore so why not do it one more time? He calls out AJ and naturally it's Kaz in the AJ gear. Kaz cuts a promo in a GREAT AJ impersonation and says how great Daniels is. Kaz: "I'm not going to wrestle you. I'm going to go find Clair Lynch and..." Daniels: "NO! NOBODY WANTS THAT!"

The tag champions come out and challenge Bad Influence for right now.

Hernandez/Chavo Guerrero vs. Bad Influence

Fast paced start with Daniels getting thrown around by Chavo. Off to Hernandez for a bearhug into a belly to belly overhead suplex. The champions pound away on Daniels before slamming Kaz onto Daniels for no

cover. Daniels begs away from Hernandez and we take a break. Back with Hernandez doing his delayed vertical suplex on Daniels. I'm not sure if any time has actually passed since we left. Things break down and Daniels takes over on SuperMex.

The non-champions hit back to back slingshot strikes on Hernandez to take over. The match drags on and gets very boring in a hurry with the heels in control. After about 8 hours, the lukewarm tag brings in Chavo who hits Three Amigos on Kaz. Bad Influence hits a Hart Attack for two but Hernandez sends them to the floor. The champs hit a double dive to the floor before throwing Kaz back in for the Frog Splash and the pin at 14:30.

Rating: C. The match was fine but OH MY GOODNESS Chavo and Hernandez are boring. You have Bad Influence getting some of the funniest lines in this company in years and they get to job time after time to this generic Latino tag team. Seriously, that's the ONLY thing about the champs that sets them apart from any two other guys. They're the champions and they're going to have them for a long time, because there is no tag division in TNA.

Hardy has little to say.

Video on Aces and 8's attacking people with the hammer.

We see the guy that Aces and 8's wants to join...and it's Mr. Anderson. He's offered women to help them out and apparently they're good enough to sway him into considering it.

Gail Kim vs. Miss Tessmacher

You know, for those people who wanted this feud to be picked up again. Tessmacher takes over to start and does the Stinkface thing in the corner. Gail gets knocked to the floor but takes over back inside. Kim loads up a super rana but Tessmacher blocks it, sending Gail down onto her head. FREAKING OW MAN! A dragon sleeper in the corner doesn't do much for Tessmacher so Gail takes over again. The sloppiness continues but Tessmacher can't hit that Tesshocker thing of hers. A top rope elbow misses Gail and Eat Defeat ends this at 5:24.

Rating: D. I can't stand the Knockouts anymore and these two sucking the charisma out of things that don't even have charisma in the first place are a good reason for that. Nothing to see here at all and I barely have enough to say to fill in the four lines of space that I try to have for each rating.

Next week it's Aces and 8's vs. Angle/Joe in a cage. Sure why not.

Bobby Roode vs. Austin Aries

Feeling out process to start until Aries sends Roode to the floor. He loads up the suicide dive but stops cold when Roode is waiting on him. We take a break (complete with a Hardy voiceover) and come back to see them hammering on each other before Aries is sat on top. They ring each others' ears and trade pokes to the eyes. Aries knocks Roode down and tries what looks like an elbow, only to roll through when Roode moves.

Bobby loads up a spear but gets caught in the Last Chancery. Roode pokes the eyes to escape and puts on the Crossface which I guess is his secondary finisher. Aries goes to the eyes as well to escape, showing some nice storytelling here. Roode begs off in the corner but trips Aries up for two with his feet on the ropes.

Aries tries a rollup with trunks for two of his own but walks into the spinebuster for two. Hebner disarms Roode of the chair he picked up, allowing Aries to hit a discus elbow for two. Now Austin brings in the chair but Henber will still have none of it. Hebner goes off on both guys so they both deck him and toss him to the floor, throwing the match out at about 13:00.

Rating: B-. I had a great time with this and I'm glad neither guy won. There was no reason to have one guy go over the other and the stereo cheating was a great touch. It's clear they're setting up a threeway and that's probably the right move to go with until we set up Aries vs. Hardy whatever at Lockdown. Good stuff here.

Post match they both go for the chair but Hardy runs out and takes both guys out to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The first hour was pretty good but after that this show fell off a cliff. I'm not sure what it was but I think the tag match had something to do with it. The problem with TNA is when something is bad, it's REALLY bad and that's what happened here. We're two weeks away from Genesis and as usual, we have NOTHING scheduled yet. The three way is pretty obvious, but other than that the card could go in a lot of directions. By this point though, we should have hit some stops as we head in a direction.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Masked Man – Koquina Clutch

Rob Van Dam b. Christian York – Five Star Frog Splash

Chavo Guerrero/Hernandez b. Bad Influence – Frog Splash to Kazarian

Gail Kim b. Miss Tessmacher – Eat Defeat

Austin Aries vs. Bobby Roode went to a no contest

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**On This Day: December 26,
1988 – Starrcade 1988: One of**

the Loudest Pops Ever

Starrcade 1988

Date: December 26, 1988

Location: Norfolk Scope, Norfolk, Virginia

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Bob Caudle

In addition to the main event I talked about, the other major match is Sting teaming up with Dusty Rhodes to take on the freshly evil Road Warriors for their newly won tag team titles. The Warriors had turned on Dusty during a six man tag so Dusty went out and got a young star in Sting to team with him. This was a big deal for Sting as in March he had received a world title shot against Flair on live national television, so he was clearly ready for the move to the next level. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the two major matches already listed along with Barry Windham vs. Bam Bam Bigelow for the US Title.

The announcers spend awhile hyping the show.

US Tag Titles: Varsity Club vs. Fantastics

The Fantastics are defending here and are Tommy Fulton/Bobby Rodgers, as well as my own personal favorite WCW tag team from this era. The Varsity Club on the other hand was a very interesting idea. They're three guys (Steve Williams, Kevin Sullivan and Mike Rotundo) who were all (well not really in Sullivan's case) top level collegiate athletes. They had a lot of success in 1988 with Rotundo holding the TV Title for just under a

year. This is Williams/Sullivan challenging for the titles.

Sullivan and Fulton start things off with the champion speeding things up. A Thesz Press gets two on Kevin and it's off to Tommy for a backdrop. Williams (also called Dr. Death or Doc) gets the tag and the Fantastics stop cold. Jason Hervey from the Wonder Years is here. Doc powers Rodgers down to the mat as the match slows way down. Off to Fulton who can't do anything with Williams' power either. The champions finally start double teaming but Fulton gets caught in a gorilla press with multiple lifts in the air.

Fulton comes back with what I think was a dropkick to the ribs followed by a regular dropkick to the face. Williams misses an elbow and it's back to Tommy with a dropkick of his own. Back to Sullivan who misses a clothesline and falls to the floor. For him, that's an upgrade over his usual stuff. Back in and Rodgers counters a backdrop and dropkicks Kevin down again. Williams comes back in but gets caught in a double noggin knocker and a double backdrop.

Things settle down a bit and Williams rams Tommy face first into the buckle before bringing Sullivan back in. Kevin does little of note (as usual) and tags Doc again for more power brawling. Sullivan comes back and gets rolled up for two as Tommy has far better luck against him than Dr. Death. Williams puts a bearhug on the freshly tagged in Fulton, who pokes Doc in the eye to escape the hold.

Back to Rodgers who slams Sullivan off the top but hits knees on a top rope splash. Williams comes back in to run Tommy over, allowing Kevin to get a few near falls. We hit the chinlock on Rodgers before it's back to Williams for even more punishment. The Varsity Club tags in and out quite well here. Off to another chinlock by Doc before it's back to Sullivan

for a pair of double stomps to the ribs.

Tommy finally avoids a knee drop and gets the hot tag off to Fulton. Bobby pounds away on Steve with everything he's got before putting on a sleeper. Tommy puts one on Sullivan as Bobby charges at Williams, only to get caught in a Hot Shot (picture a spinebuster but Williams falls backwards to drop Bobby's throat on the top rope) for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C+. Not a bad tag match here and they're getting close to actually having a good opening match for Starrcade. The Varsity Club was on their last legs at this point but winning the titles here was a nice boost for them. Williams looked ready to be a huge star but for some reason it never quite happened.

Tony Schiavone and Magnum TA, the hosts for the evening, talk about the remaining matches.

Midnight Express vs. Midnight Express

This has a very interesting backstory to it. The Midnight Express first formed back in 1981 as a three man team with Dennis Condrey, Randy Rose and Norvell Austin (last mention of him in this discussion). Once the team split up, a man named Bobby Eaton came into the same territory as Condrey and the Midnight Express was reformed as a regular two man tag team. They also picked up Jim Cornette as a manager and became one of the greatest tag teams of all time.

A few years later, Dennis left the team and Jim Crockett Promotions with

no given explanation (allegedly drug problems but that's never been confirmed). With Condrey gone, Eaton needed a new partner. A former opponent of his named Stan Lane was brought in and the new combination proved to be even more talented than Condrey and Eaton had been. This is probably the most famous version of the team.

Around this time, Condrey and Randy Rose teamed up in the AWA (the midwestern territory) and won their world tag team titles. Soon after dropping the belts, Cornette appealed to the NWA to bring Rose and Condrey back in for a Midnights vs. Midnights feud. Soon after Eaton/Lane lost the world tag titles, Cornette got a phone call laughing about the loss. Apparently Jim recognized the voice and said come say it to his face. Condrey, Rose and their manager Paul E. Dangerously stormed the ring and beat down Lane and Cornette. Tonight is the big brawl between the teams.

Eaton and Lane hit the ring fast and the beating is on. Even Cornette wants to fight Paul and the original Midnights head to the floor. Lane and Eaton double suplex Condrey into the ring and the original Midnights are in trouble early on. We finally start with Lane vs. Condrey, the latter of which is sent to the floor. Cornette blasts him in the back with the tennis racket, sending Dangerously into a frenzy.

Back in and Lane hits a quick atomic drop on Rose to send him to the floor, stopping things again. Eaton comes in for an elbow drop to Rose's back as we finally get going. Paul rings the bell for some reason as Eaton knocks Randy out to the floor. Lane continues to clean house, this time sending Condrey into the corner before tagging Eaton back in. It's totally one sided so far.

Eaton and Condrey slug it out with Bobby taking over and dropping a top

rope elbow drop for no cover. Back to Stan for a chinlock as things slow down. The fans are totally behind Eaton and Lane here. Eaton comes back in and throws Condrey into the corner for a tag to Randy. Lane blocks a monkey flip from Rose and it's back to Eaton. Bobby finally misses a charge into the corner, allowing the original Midnights to get in some offense.

We hit ten minutes into the match as Rose comes off the middle rope to blast Eaton in the back of the head. Back in and Condrey hits a quick clothesline and some knees to Bobby's ribs. Cornette chases Paul into the ring but Dangerously gets away. Things calm down with a chinlock by Dennis but Bobby comes back with a swinging neckbreaker. Rose comes back in to break up a hot tag though as the original Midnights maintain control.

Off to a front facelock on Eaton with Rose cranking away on his head. Bobby finally backdrops out of it but Condrey comes right in with some more knees to Eaton's back to keep him down. Back to Rose as Condrey chokes away even more behind the referee's back. Dennis finally comes back in legally and pounds away on Bobby's injured ribs but the original Midnights miss the Rocket Launcher (Rose goes up top and Condrey launches him at Eaton in a big splash) allowing for the hot tag to Lane.

Stan cleans house and dances a bit before kicking Rose in the back of the head. Everything breaks down and the referee is knocked to the floor. Dangerously nails Lane with his telephone but Cornette takes out Paul. The referee sees the phone and won't count the pin on Lane as the match continues. With Condrey distracted, the new Midnights hit the Double Goozle (clothesline from Eaton, rollup from Lane) for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: B. Really good and fast paced tag match here as both teams looked sharp. The idea here was very simple and sometimes you don't need anything more than that. Having the managers get involved was a nice touch and the whole thing worked really well. This was one of the hottest stories in the company for months on end and it's easy to see why given how crisp things looked here.

Post match the original Midnights and Heyman destroy the new Midnights and Cornette. With the originals on Cornette though, Eaton gets the tennis racket and runs them off.

The Varsity Club talks about how awesome they are and swears they'll always be at the top. Oh and Mike Rotundo is going to run Rick Steiner out of wrestling.

Russian Assassins vs. Junkyard Dog/Ivan Koloff

This is a thrown together tag match and if the Russians lose, they have to unmask. The Dog is recently here from the WWF where he wasn't a huge deal but he was a big deal in the UWF. Dog starts with we'll say Assassin #1 and the masked man is sent into the corner for a quick two count. Off to #2 who is almost immediately knocked to the floor with a big right hand. Paul Jones, now a Russian sympathizer, pulls #2's leg onto the ropes for the break.

Off to Ivan with a hard clothesline and he chokes #2 down to the mat with ease. #2 charges into a boot in the corner and there's a middle rope clothesline from Ivan for two. JYD and Ivan hit a double clothesline on #2 but #2 comes back with a headbutt of his own to put Dog down. Everything breaks down for a bit until Dog gets a near fall on #1 off a

clothesline. The Assassins double team JYD but #2 misses a splash in the corner. Ivan comes in to clean house as everything breaks down again. In the confusion, the Russians load up a foreign object in their masks and a headbutt ends Ivan.

Rating: D. This wasn't any good. I have no idea why Ivan and the Dog teamed up for this match and I didn't even know the Assassins were a team anymore at this point. This came off like a long filler match which isn't something you should have to use on a card with just seven matches.

The announcers wrap up the first three matches for some reason.

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Mike Rotundo

This should pick things up a bit. The idea here is that Rick used to be in the Varsity Club but was used as a whipping boy by Rotundo for the better part of a year. One day Steiner, whose mind is a bit scrambled because of a car accident he had a few years earlier, got sick of Mike's treatment of him and suplexed Rotundo into the middle of next week. Rotundo agreed to face Steiner here to embarrass him, because Rotundo claimed that no one could beat him in a twenty minute match, which is the time limit for TV Title matches. Mike is defending if that's not clear. Kevin Sullivan is locked in a cage hanging from the ceiling.

Mike gets knocked out to the floor to start as Rick is really excited early on. Back in and the champion puts on a wristlock but gets caught in a quick fireman's carry to get us back to a standoff. Rick hooks a headlock for a bit until Mike shoves him away. Steiner is perfectly fine with that and takes Rotundo's head off with a Steiner Line for two. A drop toehold puts Rick down but he immediately counters into a

hammerlock. Steiner has been out wrestling Rotundo the entire time here.

Mick finally counters into a headlock on the mat but Rick, the good guy here, pulls the hair to escape. Back up and Steiner puts on a headlock but gets suplexed down by the champion. They head to the mat again with Mike holding Rick down in a headscissors. Apparently that's too boring for them so it's back up for some more circling. Rick starts dancing a bit so Mike bails to the floor for a breather.

Back in and Rick runs him over again, only to miss a charge and go flying over the top and out to the floor. Mike pounds away with some elbows to the head back inside followed by a kick to the chest. Off to a chinlock by Rotundo for a LONG time as the match slows down again. A hard clothesline puts Steiner down again as the commentary has stopped for some reason. Rick comes back with a sunset flip for two but gets punched in the jaw for his efforts.

Rick fights back again and hits a quick Steiner Line to take Rotundo down. Now the commentary is back and Steiner is pounding away on Mike in the corner. A big backdrop puts the champion down and a powerslam gets two. Rick hits the belly to belly suplex but Steve Williams rings the bell. The referee thinks it's the time limit but we've only gone about seventeen minutes out of twenty allotted.

The timekeeper tells the referee what happened as Sullivan is lowered. Another referee comes down as well and Sullivan gets on the apron. Steiner rams Rotundo into Sullivan, knocking the champion out. Rick gets the pin (from both referees) and the title, blowing the roof off the place. It's one of the loudest pops you'll ever hear anywhere in wrestling.

Rating: C-. The match mostly sucked, but man alive the ending to that was awesome. This is a perfect example of how you blow off a story at the biggest show of the year. The fans went NUTS for the ending as they identified with Steiner as someone standing up to a bully and finally getting his revenge on said bully. Rotundo would get the title back in a few weeks, but THIS match was the important moment and it was done perfectly.

Rick hits the floor and sprints around the ring, pointing at a confused Rotundo and shouting I BEAT YOU I BEAT YOU I BEAT YOU! He grabs the TV Title and runs out of the arena before Williams can kill him as the fans come unglued. This is one of those moments where if you don't smile just a little bit, odds are you don't have a soul.

Tony and Magnum talk about what we just saw and the remainder of the card.

US Title: Barry Windham vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Bigelow is a four hundred pound bald monster covered in tattoos who wrestles like he's about a hundred and fifty pounds lighter. Windham is a Horseman and defending here. Bigelow has Oliver Humperdink with him who was a lower level manager in the 80s while Barry has JJ Dillon who I'm sure you've heard of by now. Feeling out process to start with neither guy doing much in the early going. Barry takes it into the corner for some big right hands but Bigelow comes back with an airplane spin of all things.

The champion bails to the floor for a timeout before coming back in to suplex Bigelow down. Bam Bam pops back up and drills Windham in the face

with a clothesline to send him outside again. Back in again and Bigelow runs Barry down one more time as Windham has no idea what to do here. A HUGE gorilla press puts Windham on the floor again as this has been one sided so far.

Bam Bam pounds away in the corner and Windham falls flat on his face. A dropkick sends Windham out to the floor as the fans are going nuts. Bigelow suplexes him down for two and it's off to a chinlock. Barry fights up and finally gets in some shots to the ribs. Bigelow is knocked to the floor and lands on his knee to really slow him up. They head back in with Bam Bam knocking Barry down from the apron and hitting a slingshot splash. Bigelow lets him up for some reason before slamming Barry down, only to miss the top rope splash.

Windham lariats him down and is all fired up now. A belly to back suplex puts Bam Bam down in an impressive display of strength. Barry pounds down right hands in the corner and launches Bigelow out to the floor. Back in and there's Windham's claw hold for a bit until Bigelow staggers into the corner for the break. Bigelow is slammed down but Barry misses a top rope elbow. Bam Bam starts pounding away and charges into Barry, knocking both guys over the top and out to the floor. Barry rams him into the post and Bigelow can't make it back in before the ten count.

Rating: B-. This was a big power brawl and it worked pretty well for the most part. The ending is lame but I guess the idea was to keep Bigelow looking strong. That's rather odd given that Bigelow was pretty much gone from the company after this. Bam Bam looked good here though and we got a good match out of these two so this was a solid effort.

Rick Steiner says he got tired of the Varsity Club calling him stupid. Apparently his friend Alex promised him cake. Alex would be his hand

puppet.

Tag Titles: Road Warriors vs. Dusty Rhodes/Sting

So a few weeks before this, the Road Warriors had turned heel on Dusty and tried to blind him with one of the spikes from their shoulder pads. With Dusty down, they had also gone after Sting, setting up this match for revenge. The Warriors also mauled the Midnight Express for the tag titles so the belts are on the line also. It's a short but simple story and that's all it needed to be.

Sting and Animal get things going and Sting isn't used to not being the strong one. Animal runs him over but Sting comes right back with a dropkick to send Animal to the floor. The problem with the angle is apparent very early: the fans love all four guys. The Road Warriors had a huge heel turn but they were so beloved that no one wanted to boo them. Dusty comes in to crank on the arm but instead goes after Animal's eye to send him to the floor.

Off to Hawk vs. Sting with the challenger cranking on the arm again. Hawk is WAY too muscled for that to have much effect though and he punches his way out of it. He stomps Sting down in the corner and fires off lefts and rights but one HUGE right hand from Sting drops Hawk. You'll probably never see that happen again. There's a powerslam on Hawk and it's back to Animal for an easy gorilla press on Sting.

Sting knocks Animal right back to the floor and hits a huge dive off the top to take him down. The crowd loves Sting and with good reason: he has so much charisma he can barely contain it. Off to Dusty who wraps Animal's leg around the post but like an idiot, Dusty allows the tag off

to Hawk. Dusty loads up his awful figure four on Hawk but Animal saves the hold from being butchered again. Hawk knocks Dusty to the floor and stomps away before heading back in for punches to the jaw.

Dusty comes back with a dropkick to stagger Hawk but Animal comes right back in and chokes Rhodes down. Off to a neck crank by Animal as the Dusty portion of this match continues to be a letdown. Hawk comes back in with a sleeper and Dusty continues his "stand around and look annoyed" style of selling. A jawbreaker lets Dusty out of the hold and thank goodness we get the tag off to Sting. He dropkicks Animal into the corner and hits the Stinger Splash but Hawk breaks up the Scorpion Deathlock. Everything breaks down and Sting hits a top rope crossbody, but Paul Ellering pulls the referee out for the DQ.

Rating: C. The dilemma of this match is simple: when Dusty is in there it's dull and when Sting is in there it's good. The other problem here though is that there was no way they could live up to the hype of this match. This was built up as a dream match and rarely do those things ever work. Also it never felt like Sting and Dusty were out for vengeance with Dusty looking bored out there for awhile. Not that any of this mattered as Dusty would be fired soon after for the excessive blood used in the attack that led up to this feud.

NWA World Title: Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger

Speaking of Dusty being fired, since he knew that he was going to be gone as both a wrestler and the booker soon after this, he tried to mess with his real life rival Ric Flair before leaving. The original plan for this match was to have the Varsity Club jump Luger and have Rick Steiner, who remember is basically mentally handicapped, beat Flair for the world title in five minutes. As you can guess, that's not what happens but it's

an example of what happens when personal issues get in the way of the booking.

If Flair is disqualified here, he loses the title. Flair WOO's in Luger's face to start before strutting around a bit. No contact in the first minute or so. Flair hits some chops before being clotheslined out to the floor by the much stronger Luger. Legendary wrestler Lou Thesz is in the audience. Back in and Flair tries a hammerlock but is easily overpowered into the ropes.

Another clothesline puts Flair down and he hides in the corner for a breather. A powerslam puts Ric down again and there's a gorilla press for good measure. Off to a wristlock by Luger before he no sells a chop. Flair is sent arm first into the buckle and it's off to a hammerlock by the challenger. Back up and Ric FINALLY pokes him in the eye to get himself a breather. Flair tries the chops again and Luger just yells at him. Those chops never worked on guys like Luger and Sting but Flair never learned.

They head to the floor with Luger cranking Flair's arm around the barricade to injure it even more. Back to the armbar by Luger as this has been one sided so far. Back up and another clothesline puts Flair down for one and Flair rolls to the apron. There's a suplex back inside for another near fall on the champion. Luger isn't getting frustrated yet but he misses a jumping elbow drop to slow him down.

Back to the floor with Flair sending him face first into the barricade and chopping away which actually has an effect now. They go back inside and Flair stomps on the ribs but tries more chops which just wake Luger up. Lex puts on a sleeper but gets suplexed right back down to give both guys a breather. The Figure Four is countered into a small package for

two by the challenger, followed by a superplex for two more.

Now Luger puts the figure four on Flair but the champion eventually makes it into the ropes. Lex pounds away in the corner but accidentally knocks the referee down. Flair uses the distraction to rake Luger's eyes and throw him over the top, but Luger dives back in for a clothesline for two. Lex pounds away in the corner and sends him into the other corner for the Flair Flip. Another suplex gets another two on the champion but the referee gets taken down again.

Luger hits another powerslam but doesn't cover for some reason. To be fair the guy never has been all that bright. He calls for the Rack but a JJ Dillon distraction lets Flair hit Luger in the leg with a chair to completely change momentum. Back in and Flair cannonballs down onto the leg as Luger is in BIG trouble. Flair kicks him in the knee and drops his own knee on Luger's bad knee before putting on the Figure Four. Luger sits up and flexes his muscles before turning the hold over for a break. The leg is badly damaged though so Luger's explosiveness is gone.

Flair goes up but Luger manages to slam him off the top on just one good leg. Luger no sells a right hand to the head and is all fired up again. There's another gorilla press slam but the knee goes out as he turns Flair over. Flair sends him out to the floor again but Lex comes back in with a sunset flip for two. Luger flexes again but pounds Flair down in the corner on pure adrenaline. A clothesline gets two and there's another powerslam. Luger calls for the Rack but after he gets Flair up, the knee gives out and Flair falls on top, throws his feet on the ropes for additional leverage, and retains the title.

Rating: A. This is an excellent match with an excellent story being told. Luger was such a natural athletic machine that he would never stop going

on pure athleticism alone and eventually his body gave out on him, giving Flair the win. These two had great chemistry together and would always have good if not great matches together. Excellent main event here and well worthy of closing out the biggest show of the year.

The announcers talk about how great a match we just saw. As they're talking, you can hear a battle royal being announced as a post PPV dark match.

Flair goes on a rant about how awesome he is and how the title is his.

The announcers talk about how great the company is.

A highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was one of the best Starrcades to date with arguably the best main event yet. There are seven matches on the card and only one of them is actually bad. The main event is excellent, the Midnights match is very good, there's a great moment with the TV Title changing hands. The best sign of this show though is the rise of the young stars. Sting was in there with some major names, Luger had Flair beat, and Rick Steiner winning the title was a great moment that people genuinely cared about. Solid show here and worth checking out if you can find it.

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Thought of the Day: Where Is TNA?

Fallout from the awards. As I've been doing the awards this year, it's come to my attention that TNA is notably absent. I've been reading through the WrestleZone Forums to make sure I'm not overlooking anything big and TNA doesn't come up much there either. This has been a really bad year for TNA as they just haven't had much to talk about. Everything has either been predictable, not very interesting or repetitive. There are certainly bright spots (Bad Influence, Angle vs. Roode), but so much stuff just doesn't stand out or doesn't feel important at all. Take Aces and 8's ending for instance. yeah the match that got rid of them was entertaining, but it was clear that Anderson was going to win and the moment isn't that big as the bikers had been dead in the water for years. There's nothing special going on over there and it's showing badly.

2013 Awards: Angle of the Year

Make your own Kurt jokes.

This one comes down to two options as most angles either aren't all that entertaining or get on my nerves with stupid twists.

I'll throw in an honorable mention to Angle vs. Roode since TNA has had a really bad year. This started off as a makeshift match for Angle but it's turned into one of the few bright spots in TNA in the last few months. Roode is looking like a killer for the first time in a long time and Angle is Angle. Good stuff all around there.

Now to the real contenders.

First up: Heyman vs. Punk. The premise was great, the beginning was great, the stuff with Lesnar was great, the ending...was that the ending? That's where they lose me as the ending just kind of happened instead of building up to a big conclusion. When I hear Punk talking about wanting to destroy Heyman for months, I need more than him just beating on Paul with a kendo stick on top of the Cell. It didn't help that Ryback and Axel are a long jump down from Lesnar.

The only other option is the winner: the rise of Daniel Bryan. If anyone has had a hotter year in recent memory than Bryan, I can't remember him. He starts out the year as part of one of the best teams in years before moving up to beating everyone in sight. Bryan got the rub of a lifetime with Cena selecting him as the Summerslam opponent and he capitalized on it with the running knee (that was awesome) to pin Cena 100% clean for the title. I say rise of Daniel Bryan because everything after that was pretty horrible for Daniel, so much like Total Divas, we'll just pretend none of that happened and that Daniel is still WWE Champion.

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