

205 Live – May 2, 2017: Nice and Polite

205 Live

Date: May 2, 2017

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a new month and that means we're still in the Neville vs. Austin Aries world as Neville got himself disqualified to retain the Cruiserweight Title on Sunday, meaning we're likely seeing a third match. Other than that we have some midcard feuds, including another round in the Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa story. Let's get to it.

We open with some post-Smackdown video of Chris Jericho being taken to the back. I like that a lot more than rushing him out for the sake of starting the far less important show. At least it adds some realism.

The traditional opening recap looks at the Cruiserweight Title match and Neville telling TJ Perkins that Austin Aries is their problem. Aries then defeated Perkins with the Last Chancery.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk for a bit because WE NEED DISTINCT COLORS FOR EVERY SHOW OR THE COMPANY WILL FALL APART!

TJP vs. Lince Dorado

No more Perkins apparently. They hit the mat running to start and it's a double nipup into a standoff. Dorado sends him to the floor and the Asai moonsault makes things even worse. Back in and TJP stomps away in the corner, drawing threats of disqualification. Only if the storyline calls for it of course.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before TJP puts him on the top and starts going after the mask. Dorado elbows him back and mostly hits what I think was supposed to be a moonsault double stomp to the back with TJP still on his feet. That sounds like a fairly dangerous spot

but it could have been a mistimed moonsault press. Dorado's high crossbody gets two, followed by a superkick for the same. TJP goes after the mask again though, allowing him to get the kneebar and the submission at 7:04.

Rating: C+. This was a better match than I was expecting from Dorado, who rarely does much for me. TJP (I'm not wild on the new name) could be a major player in the division and the heel turn really has done him a lot of good. Having him win a hard fought match like this one is what he needs, though a win over Aries would help even more.

We get a sitdown interview with Brian Kendrick on his feud with Akira Tozawa. They were friends for a long time but now Tozawa thinks he's too good for Kendrick to be his protege. Tozawa is paying attention to the fans when he needs to be winning matches. Kendrick says he's done playing.....and then he gets his head kicked off by Tozawa, who says lesson #5 is to always end an interview with impact.

Mustafa Ali vs. Drew Gulak

Before the match, Gulak promises to bring true change to 205 Live. Gulak headlocks him to start and yells about how Ali needs to get smart. Ali apparently does just that with an armdrag and hurricanrana, only to have Gulak hide in the ropes. Another flip only seems to annoy Gulak as he blasts Ali with a clothesline for two, followed by a camel clutch. Ali fights up and grabs his neckbreaker but his top rope splash hits raised knees, giving Gulak the pin at 5:03.

Rating: C+. I liked the story here more than the first match and that's a good sign. This fit the story they were going for quite well with the clear ending, though I'm curious to see where they're going. Gulak probably needs to gain a follower in the future but he's doing well enough on his own for now. Getting wins is the next important step as he has to be proven right for this to mean anything.

Post match Gulak says this is proof that his message works and he's

the future around here.

We get a long recap of Alicia Fox breaking up with Noam Dar thanks to Rich Swann, setting up a feud between the two of them.

Rich Swann vs. Noam Dar

Swann's trunks have little wings on the hips. The bell rings and Graves says that it was a lot longer than a four hour flight for Dar. The announcers stop to chuckle as this is a reference to Phillips' extramarital affair that came out on Instagram. That's quite the risque line but Phillips seemed ok with it.

Swann headlocks Dar to the mat to start and a dropkick takes us right into the chinlock. Dar finally gets up and crotches him on the top, followed by a clothesline out to the floor. Back in Dar starts in on the arm with an armbar and some cranking. We hit the slow heel offense, including a chinlock and a belly to back suplex. Swann makes his comeback but a kick to the leg puts him on the floor again.

Noam's arm work goes nowhere as Swann runs back inside for a running flip dive. The Phoenix splash connects but Swann's arm bangs onto the mat and it's a delayed cover for two. Back up and Dar CRANKS on the arm, only to have Swann kick him upside the head. Rich dives into a Fujiwara armbar until a rope is grabbed. Not that it matters as Dar hits a running kick to the face for the pin at 13:07.

Rating: B-. The match worked but I'm not sure how much sense it makes to have a match built around destroying a relationship be built around arm work. That being said, Swann sold the arm well and the match was solid enough. I'm not sure how they can keep the feud going after a clean loss like this but they've pulled it off before. Post match Alicia comes out and reunites with Dar.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a night of good wrestling and storyline advancement, which is a positive sign considering there were no title implications all night. That's the right idea as you can only do the Neville vs. Aries stuff so many times before it gets boring in a hurry. Good show though as 205 Live continues to be an

inoffensive, easy to watch show.

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Impact Wrestling – May 4, 2017: GFW Finally Gets Its Own TV Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: May 4, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

We're starting to get close to Slammiversary and that means we need to start lining up some title matches. There isn't a lot announced for this week's show as things are moving at a somewhat slow pace right now. Then again we have about two months before the next pay per view so they can take their time. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week. Thank goodness as I had to pull up last week's review to remember anything about that show.

Opening sequence.

Dave Penzer is now doing ring announcing, which hopefully means the

Swoggle vs. Spud is done.

Matt Sydal vs. Eddie Edwards

Josh says Sydal made his debut in the six sided ring last week, which means Josh doesn't know his TNA history. Feeling out process to start with a technical sequence leading to a standoff. Sydal gets in a few kicks to the legs for the first advantage before countering a slam off the top with an ankle scissors. Now why didn't Flair ever think of that? Eddie elbows his way out of a Muta Lock and grabs a Blue Thunder Bomb for two.

A sitout F5 sets up a spinwheel kick but Eddie can't follow up. Matt hurricanranas him off the top for two but gets sent outside for the suicide dive. Back from a break with Sydal getting two off a powerbomb, only to get caught with a middle rope Codebreaker. As good as this has been, let's pause for Josh to rant about JB a bit. Eddie slips out of a powerbomb but the Boston Knee Party is blocked with a jumping knee to the face. The shooting star press gives Matt the clean pin at 14:51.

Rating: B+. Where in the world did that come from? This was one of the best matches the company has put on in a long time and even Josh couldn't make ruin it for me. Eddie losing clean aside, it's cool to see a very good, long, clean match, especially opening a show. Good stuff here and Sydal looks like a star coming out of it.

They shake hands post match. Sydal leaves but here are Angelina Love and Davey Richards to beat Edwards down. Eddie gets laid out with a chair until Alisha dives off the stage to take Angelina down.

Magnus thinks he should be in the main event of Slammiversary but now he has to face Alberto El Patron. If that's what he has to do then so be it, but here's Matt Morgan to say he should get the shot. Bruce Prichard comes in and makes a GFW Title match for later tonight.

KM is exercising when a custodian comes in to clean. He sweeps up trash and leaves but KM throws a piece of paper on the floor and yells at the guy for missing it. KM does it again and the custodian

says it wasn't there ten seconds ago. That doesn't sit well with KM, who doesn't like being called a liar.

GFW Women's Title: Sienna vs. Christina Von Eerie

Von Eerie is defending. Sienna grabs a suplex for two to start and Von Eerie is in trouble early on. Another suplex sets up a neck crank and Von Eerie is dumped outside in a big crash. Christina tries a Pedigree on the apron but gets backdropped back onto the floor as this has been completely one sided. Back in and a Pounce completes the squash to give us a new champion at 3:56. The announcers' biggest concern: Sienna has no respect for the Jarretts.

Rating: D. Here's the big problem with this whole GFW thing: what is GFW and why should the fans care? Unless you were watching for about four to six weeks worth of shows two years ago, it's just a collection of belts from a promotion that ran a bunch of house shows and hasn't been heard from since. I get that the hardcore fans are going to know what's going on but catering to that audience when you're drawing 300,000 fans a week and wanting to expand is a really bad idea.

As for the match itself, Von Eerie beat a jobber last week and that's the grand total of her exposure here until she got squashed to lose her title. Get rid of these belts as soon as possible or just drop them already. It's clear that Impact Wrestling isn't going to bother to explain ANY of this so get rid of them as soon as possible.

Eli Drake tells Bruce Prichard he wants in on the title picture. Instead he gets Alberto El Patron later tonight, but it's for a shot at the GFW Title.

ODB wants to make Impact great.

JB is behind Josh and mocks his over the top mannerisms. This is still your top story.

Karen Jarrett makes Alisha vs. Angelina Love for some point in the future. Sienna comes up to brag about being champion but Karen says the target is on Sienna's back. I still have no idea why this is

supposed to be interesting.

Ethan Carter III vs. John Bolen

Carter kicks him in the face to start and chokes on the ropes. A running knee to the back sends Bolen outside. Back in and the TK3 sets up the 1%er for the pin on Bolen at 2:33.

Carter puts the new bosses on notice.

Remember how JB had a sign earlier? He still does and Josh is getting annoyed.

GFW World Title: Magnus vs. Matt Morgan

Morgan is challenging and uses the size to take over early on. A big boot sends Magnus outside but he posts Morgan for a breather. Back in and the Carbon Footprint misses so Morgan bangs up a leg to give Magnus a target. A kick to the leg sets up the Figure Four with Morgan making the ropes without too much effort.

Morgan pops up for his revolving elbows in the corner, followed by a side slam. A chokeslam gets two on the champ and the Carbon Footprint puts him on the floor. Morgan's knee gives out so Magnus can grab the title. The distraction lets Magnus get in a low blow, followed by a Michinoku Driver and the top rope elbow to retain at 9:20.

Rating: C. Technically fine, though I'm not sure if that was a heel turn from Magnus. That right there is the big problem: these guys have had maybe a match each since returning and we really don't know anything about them. Yeah they were here before but what are they now? They helped JB in his match so I guess they're faces but there's no real way to know for sure, especially given how they're fighting over a title that just appeared with Magnus. Decent match but the booking continues to be a problem.

Lashley doesn't care about the GFW Title because that's the title people can win.

More JB sign stuff.

LAX wants to hurt more people.

James Storm wants to make Impact great.

Spud, in a neck brace and with his leg in a cast, stares at a picture of Swoggle. So yes this is still going. So now we have a ring announcer feud to go with the commentator feud.

Kongo Kong vs. William Weeks

Kong throws him into the corner to start and stands on Weeks' chest. Three straight chokeslams into backbreakers (at Laurel Van Ness' orders) set up a Cannonball and a top rope splash to put Weeks away at 2:47.

Post match Braxton Sutter comes out to go after Kong. Some right hands and a clothesline put the monster on the floor so Sutter and Allie can stand tall.

Eli Drake wants to make Impact great.

We look back at Sonjay Dutt getting hurt in the X-Division Title match two weeks ago. Dutt isn't sure if he should have come back. If they don't give him the title at Slammiversary, I have no idea what they're thinking. It's not the most interesting story but they've set it up.

Eli Drake vs. Alberto El Patron

The winner gets a shot at Magnus at some point in the future. Drake runs away but gets pulled back to ringside, where the referee ejects Tyrus. Eli is fine enough to suplex him on the ramp but Alberto shakes it off and hits a suicide dive. Back from a break with Drake suplexing him onto the apron and choking on the floor.

Drake's chinlock doesn't work but Alberto misses a charge and both people are down. Drake gets back up and grabs a torture rack neckbreaker for a close two, only to have Alberto nail a low superkick for the same. The cross armbreaker is countered into a twisting throw for another near fall as this is far more competitive than I was expecting.

Drake can't get a superplex and of course he winds up in the Tree of Woe. For once someone is actually smart enough to sit up and pull El Patron down. A springboard moonsault gives Drake two but he gets

caught in the cross armbreaker. That's countered as well but Drake gets caught in the ropes, setting up the double stomp (from the mat instead of the stomp) to give Alberto the pin at 17:56.

Rating: B-. Good match here as Drake's in-ring abilities are starting to match his incredible talking skills. The same problem still remains though: they're fighting over titles that have no meaning to the Impact Wrestling fans, which becomes a problem. The story would be exactly the same if they were all just fighting for a shot at Lashley. Just say Magnus is in this spot because he's a former World Champion and thinks he's entitled. It's the same story advancement and the same ending. Why is that so complicated?

Overall Rating: C+. This is a REALLY tricky one to grade as the opener and main events were both very good but everything in the middle was just there for the most part. The booking continues to cater to the fans who are already here and the stupid battling announcers are now being joined by a former wrestler/manservant vs. a former leprechaun who is the illegitimate son of the owner the biggest wrestling company in the world. You need a lot more than that to make a company work and Impact really doesn't seem to get that.

Results

Matt Sydal b. Eddie Edwards – Shooting star press

Sienna b. Christina Von Eerie – Pounce

Ethan Carter III b. John Bolen – 1%er

Magnus b. Matt Morgan – Top rope elbow

Kongo Kong b. William Weeks – Top rope splash

Alberto El Patron b. Eli Drake – Double stomp

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

New Column: While The Beast's Away, WWE Can Still Play

What can WWE do while Lesnar is gone? Quite a bit actually.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-beasts-away-wwe-can-still-play/>

NXT – May 3, 2017: What Do You Get When You Cross A Ruby With A Moon?

NXT

Date: May 3, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

We're rapidly approaching Takeover: Chicago and that means we need

to fill in a lot of the card. As luck would have it, a major development is going to take place tonight as we have a battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title. That leaves a lot of doors open for challengers, including a potential Ember Moon rematch. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Killian Dain vs. Danny Burch

The monster Dain drives him into the corner and pulls him off the middle rope for a big crash. The backsplash connects and is greeted by a SHAVE YOUR BACK chant, followed by a series of elbow drops. Burch slugs away with a series of strikes but Dain flattens him with a running dropkick. The Ulster Plantation finishes Burch at 2:51.

The Velveteen Dream, whom I believe is Patrick Clark, is coming. The silhouette certainly looks like him.

Heavy Machinery vs. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman

The jobbers make Rey Mysterio look huge. Dozovich runs Hector over to start and a double falling headbutt makes things even worse. Ricardo is dragged in and Machinery exchange chest bumps. Knight splashes both of them in the corner before Dozovich lifts them both at the same time for a double World's Strongest Slam and the double pin at 2:41.

Post match Heavy Machinery says they love to have a good time, meaning some carb shakes and trips to the buffet. When they step in the ring, they have a hunger for smashing bodies. The appetizers are over now and they want the main course: the Authors of Pain. Heavy Machinery is very much a case of "what you see is what you get" but they play their roles very well and that's what matters the most.

Bobby Roode talks to Kona Reeves before Reeves faces Hideo Itami.

DIY might not have Heavy Machinery's size but they're the former NXT Tag Team Champions. They love more competition but the line starts behind them.

Kona Reeves vs. Hideo Itami

Itami has ditched the entrance gear and just comes out in his regular trunks and boots. Reeves jumps him before the bell though and has the advantage once the match actually starts. Kona turns up the cockiness but Hideo pops to his feet and fires off the clotheslines and kicks. More kicks knock Kona down in the corner and the GTS puts him away at 2:08. That's an effective squash but I'm not sure a two minute match is the best way to get him back on his feet after an injury and so close to what's going to be a twenty plus minute title match.

Video on Drew McIntyre, including a look back at his initial WWE run.

It's part two of the mini documentary on Roderick Strong. This time we're at home with his pregnant fiance and they're getting things ready for the baby's arrival. He loves the idea of being called a father and a husband and now those things are about to be true. We get some clips of Strong's very early career from his days in IPW Hardcore Wrestling and then his time in the Performance Center.

Now we go back to the Ring of Honor days, which still messes with me just a little bit. He was there for thirteen years and then he got the call. With tears in his eyes, Strong says don't give up and everything will be ok. We wrap it up with Strong holding his newborn baby. This was another excellent package and made me think more of Strong (who I'm a fan of) than I have before, which is exactly the point. He hasn't made an impact yet (a match in Chicago would help) but that could change very quickly.

Roode is in William Regal's office and doesn't think much of the video. He also doesn't think Hideo should get the title shot yet because it could mess with the champ's face. Regal actually agrees and puts Itami in a #1 contenders match against Strong for next week. Strong comes in and has a staredown with Roode. I thought Roode vs. Itami was already set but I do like Itami having to earn the shot.

Battle Royal

Lacey Evans, Billie Kay, Peyton Royce, Nikki Cross, Liv Morgan, Ruby

Riot, Ember Moon, Aliyah, Bianca Blair, Candice LeRae, Kimberly Frankele, Rachel Evers, Sonya Deville, Victoria Gonzalez, Sara Bridges

The winner gets Asuka in Chicago. Evans is better known as Macey Estrella, Deville is the former Daria Berenato and a lot of these women are unknowns without entrances. LeRae is a heavy fan favorite and gets a LET'S GO CANDICE chant. Gonzalez, who has some size to her, goes after Royce and Kay to start but can't get rid of them. It's your usual battle royal brawling with teased eliminations that don't go anywhere.

We take a break and come back with Gonzalez having been eliminated at the hands of Royce and Kaye. Blair is out next, followed by Aliyah elbowing Evers out to a chorus of booing. Bridges, Evans and Deville go out in the span of five seconds and Riot eliminates Kimberly. We're down to LeRae, Royce, Kay, Cross, Riot, Morgan, Moon and Aliyah. Kay kicks Candice out, earning possibly the most heat of her career.

Cross dumps Aliyah and the fans are rather pleased. Come on, Aliyah isn't....ok maybe she is that bad. Nikki does the same to Morgan and the fans are pleased all over again. Moon superkicks Kay out and gets rid of Peyton a few seconds later, leaving us with Moon, Riot and Cross. Cross goes straight for Riot but Ember kicks her in the face. All three wind up in the corner with Moon kicking the other two away and hitting the Eclipse on Cross. That's not enough for an elimination so Ember heads up again, only to have Asuka come in....for a no contest at 14:46.

Rating: D+. I liked the way they set this up with the unknowns not lasting very long, which should be the case when they didn't have any realistic chance to win the title. Just let us get to the big names and go from there. The ending though....yeah I'm not sold on that, though if they're going to a four way, this is certainly a better option than a triple elimination at the end.

Asuka sends Moon HARD to the floor and head first into the barricade. Riot gets kicked in the head and Cross is dropped as

well, leaving Asuka to shout that no one is ready for her. Asuka runs off as Moon is holding her shoulder on the floor. Regal comes out to announce the four way title match for Chicago to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is another good example of a show that wasn't about the wrestling. Tonight we set up a Takeover match, set up a #1 contenders match for the NXT Title, looked at Roderick Strong some more and established Heavy Machinery as potential Tag Team Title contenders. They don't have a lot of time between Orlando and Chicago so this is about as logical of a path as they have.

Results

Killian Dain b. Danny Burch – Ulster Plantation

Heavy Machinery b. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman – Double World's Strongest Slam

Hideo Itami b. Kona Reeves – GTS

A Battle Royal went to a no contest when Asuka interfered

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Monday Night Raw – December 2, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best In The World Because They Say So

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 2, 2002

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

So HHH is back and I'd assume that's about all you need to know for this show. That whole week without HHH around to really run the show must have scared the company as he interfered in last week's World Title match, seemingly setting up another pay per view showdown with Shawn Michaels. I'm as thrilled as you are. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about....well by George it's about HHH coming back last week! To be fair it's not like anything else was treated like it mattered last week.

Opening sequence.

Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

They don't waste time with the wrestling to start and Rosey gets dropped with a double belly to back. A double crossbody puts Bubba and Rosey down and we get down to Jamal getting knocked back and forth between the Dudleys. Rosey and Bubba chop it out with the latter taking him down into what can best be described as a cross armbreaker. D-Von stays on the arm as this is already more technical than I was expecting.

Rico gets involved for a distraction though and D-Von gets beaten down for a short while. For some reason a DDT stops Rosey but the referee doesn't see the tag. A neckbreaker puts Rosey down again and now the tag brings Bubba back in. House is cleaned but Rico gets in a kick to the back of the head. Cue Spike for the way too fast save, allowing the brothers to hit What's Up. After Rico's interference doesn't go anywhere, a 3D finishes Rosey.

Rating: C-. Well that happened. Really I'm not sure what else there is to say about the match as it just came and went. It's good to have the Dudleys back but it's very clear that there's nothing to the division at this point and if 3 Minute Warning is the best they have, they're in big trouble.

We come back from a break with all three Dudleys down, thanks to an off-camera attack at the hands of Chris Jericho and Christian and 3 Minute Warning. D-Von was put in the Walls for a Conchairto and Bubba was beaten down as well while Spike was already carried out. As much as I'd like to have seen it happen, I can greatly appreciate the idea of having stuff seem more realistic instead of having it so rigidly attached to the schedule.

Sean Morely tells Eric Bischoff that he's got this covered. Oh and call him Chief Morely. HHH to come in to say that he wrestled for thirty minutes in the Elimination Chamber but now he has to beat Rob Van Dam to become #1 contender. Bischoff doesn't want to hear it and demands great TV. Morely suggests a guest referee to be announced, likely as Shawn Michaels, so HHH can overcome even more odds.

We look at the Dudleys' beatdown again.

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

They hit the mat to start before trading arm cranks. Ivory gets two off a rollup as this isn't exactly thrilling so far. We hit the chinlock with Ivory pulling on Trish's face until she fights up for a neckbreaker. The Chick Kick gets two as the announcers debate who the guest referee is going to be. Trish hits a very assisted Stratusfaction for the pin.

Rating: D. I know Trish would get much better in the coming years but she really wasn't able to lift anything up the ladder at this point. It doesn't help that Ivory is someone who has been the same performer for years and isn't going to have a memorable match no matter what she does. They really need to bring in some exciting talent if they want this division to work as Trish vs. Victoria is only going to take them so far.

Speaking of dull women, Jackie yells at Victoria for going through her bag and a match is made. She doesn't even mind if it's not for the title, because why would she want that? Jackie beats her up because it's Texas and that means Jackie is all tough and awesome.

Jericho and Christian threaten violence against anyone who disrespect them. Christopher Nowinski instantly sucks up to them like the worm that he is. Of note: the champs' bags are chained to their lockers.

Jeff Hardy/Tommy Dreamer vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

This is the result of Regal dislocating Dreamer's jaw a few weeks back. They start fighting in the aisle with Jeff running around the ring to take both evil foreigners down. Dreamer grabs a half crab on Storm to start and gets his jaw broken again for the gimmick infringement. Regal comes in for a knee to the jaw as there's certainly a target so far. A front facelock allows Dreamer to get over for the tag to Jeff, which the referee naturally misses. With the referee dealing with Jeff, Regal gets a buckle pad off and Dreamer goes face first into the steal for the easy pin.

Rating: D. Jeff and Dreamer are a really lame low level team and having them waste Regal and Storm's time isn't that interesting. Then again, it's certainly better than the stupid hardcore feud with Nowinski. You really can tell that Jeff doesn't have any fire in him at the moment but at least he wasn't out there long enough to horribly botch anything.

Ric Flair talks about Batista's rough upbringing but Batista doesn't want to go into it. Flair doesn't seem to mind and brings up Batista bouncing from foster home to foster home. Now Batista gets to use the anger in the ring.

Batista vs. Hurricane

Spinebuster and Batista Bomb are good for the pin in under a minute. Sounds like Flair has a future as a teacher.

Kane comes out for the save because they were partners for like two weeks.

Shawn and Van Dam go face to face about how horrible HHH is. Bischoff comes in to officially make Shawn guest referee. That was ever in doubt? If Shawn doesn't play it fair, he loses the title.

Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Booker makes jokes about Jericho being left without his clothes last week and makes jokes about size. Jericho throws some chops to start and dropkicks Booker out to the floor. The top rope back elbow to the jaw gets two and it's already off to

the chinlock. After a little dance (you always need a little dance), Booker catches him on top for a big crashing superplex.

A missile dropkick gives Booker two and Jericho gets catapulted into the corner for good measure. Christian and Goldust run in but quickly cancel each other out, leaving Booker to hit the ax kick. And never mind as Chief Morely comes out and makes this a tag match, minus any sort of Teddy Long's charisma.

Rating: C+. The match was just there to fill time before the ending but it's always helpful to have people this talented in the ring. Even if they have nothing to do and are only having a simple match, they're going to do it well enough that it's something you can watch without getting bored. I mean, it's not good enough to have them get the World Title or anything but that's just crazy talk.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Booker T./Goldust

Christian and Jericho are defending and this is joined in progress with Christian in early trouble. It's off to Booker to hammer away on Jericho until the champs get in a cheap shot to take over. Jericho's running crotch shot to the back sets up more dancing but Christian's attempt earns himself a crotching.

Goldust comes in to clean house and gets two off a rollup for very hot reaction. Booker's snap spinebuster gets two and he ducks Christian's belt shot. The Book End gives Booker two more with Christian pulling the referee out. Now the belt shot works and Jericho adds the Lionsault for the pin to retain because the Texas guys have to job in their home state.

Rating: C+. Another solid outing here with all four working hard before the annoying ending that follows the WWE formula of humiliating the hometown favorites. I guess it's a good sign that Goldust didn't lose in his hometown and it's not like Booker has much more momentum to lose, even if the fans seem to love him. They really need to change the titles soon though as Goldust and Booker have been primed up for months now.

This week's Raw Retro is Austin with the cement truck destroying Vince's Corvette.

F-View shows us Test and Stacy making out on a couch, only to have her stop for the sake of a marketing idea.

Jackie vs. Victoria

Non-title. Victoria shoves her down to start and stomps a lot as the announcers make sure to talk about how tough Jackie is. Jackie gets in a hurricanrana for two but charges into a boot in the corner. The slingshot legdrop gets two but the Widow's Peak is countered with a backdrop. Jackie's spinning kick to the head gives her the clean pin and WOO TEXAS! I mean, Dallas and Austin are totally the same thing. They're only two hours apart and if you can have someone the fans don't care about win a non-title match it's completely the same as the popular team losing a title match right?

Steven Richards comes in to check on Victoria. They're still in the ring post match with Victoria demanding that Jackie come back out here. Instead it's Scott Steiner for some rhyming before destroying Steven. Cue a very smiling Bischoff to offer Steiner a contract pitch. The pitch is in the back though, where Bischoff has eight women waiting for him. Steiner says he already has a super freak tonight and opens his limo to reveal....Stephanie McMahon in a short skirt and low cut top. She has things to offer Steiner that Bischoff can't. So to sum this up: Stephanie is now hotter than eight good looking women combined.

We go to the World for RNN Breaking News....but we have breaking news in the arena, where HHH and Flair are looking for Shawn, who is in a referee shirt. Shawn is going to DQ HHH for any broken rule, which is totally going to happen because we're certainly NOT guaranteed to see HHH vs. Shawn for the title again.

HHH vs. Rob Van Dam

The winner gets Shawn, the guest referee here, at the pay per view. Actually hang on as Shawn needs to eject Flair before we get going. HHH isn't allowed to throw a closed fist so Rob springboard kicks him down for two. A slingshot dive drops HHH and there's the spinning kick to the back. Rob kicks him in the face for two more, followed by a small package for a fast counted near fall. HHH gets caught in a sleeper with Shawn sitting in front of the ropes for a nice touch.

Back up and Shawn gets bumped and since he's a referee here instead of a wrestler, a single clothesline keeps him down for a good twenty seconds. Shawn gets up to pull a chair away from HHH so Rob kicks him down by mistake. Rolling Thunder hits HHH but a chair shot knocks Rob silly for the slow counted pin.

Rating: D. Not only was it short and not very good but this felt like something Austin would have done in his day. His only support is sent outside, he has a guest referee that can't stand him and he can't use a right hand. The only cheating HHH did was swinging a chair after Rob hit the referee by mistake. I know HHH is amazing and the best thing ever (save for Stephanie) but this made him look like a face instead of the top heel.

They fight post match and Shawn gets in a superkick to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Between the two really bad women's matches, the HHH/Stephanie worship and Booker/Goldust losing in Texas in a title match they should have won months ago, this was a really bad show. The Tag Team Title match was fine until the end but the rest of the show was the standard problem this era has: bad wrestling, uninteresting storytelling and pushing people who are only there because WWE has decided they're the best things in the world.

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Smackdown – May 2, 2017: The Chris Jericho Alarm

Clock

Smackdown

Date: May 2, 2017

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal now and that means we're in the Jinder Mahal Could Be World Champion Era. Mahal cost Randy Orton the House of Horrors match on Sunday to help set up the title match at Backlash in just under three weeks so Orton is likely out for revenge. Tonight we have Chris Jericho defending his newly regained US Title against Kevin Owens, which sounds like something could be up. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, Jinder Mahal was in a photo shoot with the stolen Smackdown World Title. Shane McMahon came up and took it back while saying Mahal would be facing Sami Zayn tonight.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shane to introduce Chris Jericho as the newest member of the Smackdown roster. See, this is the new Show of Jericho so smack it down man! Cue AJ Styles, who will face the US Champion, whoever that is (Owens) at Backlash. Styles reminisces about their previous issues and says he's looking forward to Backlash where he can take the title.

That doesn't sit well with Jericho, and do you know what happens when you don't sit well with Jericho? It turns out that you get cut off by Owens, who is reminded that he tapped out. Owens wants AJ to get out of his ring so Styles goes up the ramp for a brawl. Shane: "SPLIT EM UP!" Jericho: "LET THEM FIGHT!" Shane gets his way as security breaks it up.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Zayn is still banged up after Baron Corbin attacked him last week on Talking Smack, earning Corbin a suspension for the week. Mahal elbows him in the back of the head to start but Sami speeds things

up with a headscissors. A dropkick sends Mahal outside and we take a break. Back with Sami in a chinlock for a good while until Jinder gets two off a clothesline. And never mind as it's right back to the chinlock.

Sami misses a dropkick but starts his clothesline based comeback, followed by the high crossbody for two. The corner climb tornado DDT looks to set up the Helluva Kick but one of the Singh Brothers pulls Mahal to the floor. The other grabs Sami's foot, setting up the cobra clutch slam to give Mahal the pin at 10:57.

Rating: C. I think I might be starting to like Mahal and I don't know what that means. Mahal certainly isn't the next big thing in WWE but they've built him (with the Brothers) into enough of a threat that it could make for a good one off match. It's a simple act and sometimes that's all it needs to be.

Becky Lynch comes up to the Welcoming Committee and mentions them all by name for no apparent reason. They think Becky should be getting the shots that Charlotte gets but she doesn't seem convinced.

Dolph Ziggler and some friends of his watch a Shinsuke Nakamura video and aren't impressed. Ziggler runs his mouth about Nakamura and insults Shane, who is of course right behind him.

Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

English isn't happy with Tye for cutting off his song. Dillinger starts fast with a forearm and clothesline before stomping away in the corner. As usual, the TEN chants seem to be more over than he is but take what you can get. Tye loads up the Tyebreaker but spins English around into a facebuster instead of the backbreaker for the pin at 1:05.

English seems to have a breakdown post match.

Jericho is about to talk to Renee Young (who he calls Ronnie) when he runs into the crying Aiden English. There's no need to cry when you can sing and have a hairy chest. That being said, do you know what happens when you cry on Chris Jericho's new show? HE JUST MADE

THE LIST! And so did Renee for no apparent reason!

Charlotte doesn't think much of the Welcoming Committee so they beat her down.

Naomi/Charlotte vs. Carmella/Natalya

And there's no Charlotte due to the attack. An early atomic drop doesn't do anything to Carmella so Naomi kicks the heck out of her leg. Carmella's kick has no effect either and it's time for the dancing kicks. The fresh Natalya comes in and poses a bit before getting sunset flipped for two.

A headscissors puts Natalya on the floor but she blocks a baseball slide (that's a new one) and sends Naomi face first into the steps. The double teaming puts Naomi in real trouble with Carmella shouting about Naomi wanting to kick her. Natalya and Naomi collide on a double crossbody and here's a banged up Charlotte to take the hot tag. Now it's Charlotte's turn to get taken down by the numbers game and we take a break.

Back with Natalya fighting out of a bodyscissors with ease since Carmella really isn't that big of a threat, even when Charlotte is injured. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster and the real hot tag brings in Naomi for a springboard crossbody. The Rear View should finish Carmella but Natalya offers a distraction, allowing Carmella to grab a rollup with tights for the pin at 11:42.

Rating: C-. Not much to see here but that's all you can really ask for with people like Carmella and Natalya as your top heels. Natalya has been around forever and still doesn't really have a character aside from being a member of the Hart Family and Carmella isn't exactly ready for this spot. Not a bad match but the heels need a bigger star to make this story work.

The Welcoming Committee beats on Charlotte and Naomi until Becky Lynch slowly walks out. She shakes hands with the Committee before throwing Ellsworth into the women and hammering on all of them. Tamina superkicks Becky down and the Welcoming Committee stands tall.

Sin Cara vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler elbows him in the mask to start but eats a springboard elbow for his efforts. A big kick sends Ziggler to the floor and Cara only somewhat botches the suicide dive when his feet get caught on the ropes. Back in and Ziggler gets two off a neckbreaker before they botch...I think a reversal to a suplex where Ziggler couldn't stick the landing. Ziggler quickly recovers with a fireman's carry slam but the Fameasser is countered into a powerbomb. Not that it matters as Ziggler gets the superkick for the pin at 4:33.

Rating: D. The botches hurt it but Cara got in a lot more offense than you would have expected. That helps a match like this so much as it at least makes Ziggler look like he had to break a sweat. Cara might not be great but he's a step above the Brooklyn Brawler so he should take a bit more effort.

Lana vignette.

And now, the Fashion Files from the Fashion Police. We go to a police station where Breezango are investigating the Usos for a variety of crimes. Fandango: "They're twins." Breeze: "Identity theft!" Along with making their outfits making Breezango's eyes hurt, Tyler thinks they're guilty of Jimmy and Jey walking. The big bust goes down in Chicago on May 21.

The best part here is everything in the background, ranging from a framed picture of the Big Boss Man to various news articles about the tag match to some wanted posters. A few examples are John Cena with whereabouts unknown, Nakamura as the King of Strong No Style and the Colons for real estate fraud. This is what giving a fresh team a shot can do for you as this was the first entertaining thing to happen to the division since American Alpha won the belts in the first place. Breezango might not be the best team in the world but they're likeable and this was funny so give them a one off chance.

US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Jericho is defending and Styles is banned from ringside. They waste no time in getting the fight started with Jericho stomping on the

injured hand that cost Owens the title on Sunday. Owens sends him into the steps though and takes over without too much effort. The backslash keeps Jericho in trouble and he's thrown outside for a Cannonball against the barricade.

Back from a break with Jericho escaping the Pop Up Powerbomb but Lionsaulting onto knees. The second attempt works fine and it's off to the Walls. This time Owens makes the rope but another Pop Up Powerbomb is countered into the Walls in the middle of the ring. A much better tease of the tap out sets up Owens making the ropes again and it's back to the floor. Owens nails a loud superkick and DDTs him onto the ramp. Back in and another superkick sets up the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the title back at 12:40.

Rating: B. I wanted to see more of this but they did the right thing by having Owens hit a big move with the superkick on the floor and then get in a few more moves to win the title back. It felt like Owens proving himself to be the better man and that's exactly what it needed to be. The ending wasn't exactly a surprise but Owens has the title back and that's what matters.

Medics come in to check on Jericho, who takes another powerbomb. Owens leaves and a very woozy looking Jericho is carried out. Of course Kevin comes back out and puts a chair around Jericho's neck which is sent into the post. Owens slowly walks up the ramp to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. There was no secret to the fact that this was all about the main event and almost nothing more. You can see a lot of the Backlash card from here and they're actually doing a good job of setting up a show on such short notice. The title change felt like a big moment and it sets Owens on a roll before Backlash. It's not a great show and it was rather dull at several points (namely the women's tag) but it worked well enough.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. Sami Zayn – Cobra clutch slam

Tye Dillinger b. Aiden English – Fireman's carry into a facebuster

Carmella/Natalya b. Naomi/Charlotte – Rollup with a handful of tights

Dolph Ziggler b. Sin Cara – Superkick

Kevin Owens b. Chris Jericho – Pop Up Powerbomb

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WrestleCon Supershow 2017: I Don't Do This Very Often

WrestleCon Supershow 2017

Date: March 31, 2017

Location: Wyndham Orlando Resort, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Marty DeRosa, Excalibur

This is something I've heard about for a few years now and when I saw the card, there was no question about taking it in. Basically this is a HUGE indy show with talent from all over the world working one show tied together with the incredible WrestleCon convention. I was in the crowd for this show and I'm really curious to see if it holds up on a second viewing. Let's get to it.

No real intro for the show, likely because the show was already starting late.

Michael Elgin/Mascarita Dorada/ACH vs. David Starr/Trevor Lee/Caleb

Konley

This is under Lucha Rules, meaning tags aren't required. ACH is billed as "Mr. I Paid My Bills With This Booking" in a funny bit. It should also be noted that a lot of these matches weren't announced in advance so these teams were total surprises. Dorada is better known as El Torito. The announcers talk about this being the fifth of Elgin's TEN matches over the week (it was his second of the night) compared to John Cena only wrestling one. Oh yeah it's going to be that kind of a show and that's a good thing here.

ACH and Starr run the ropes to start and it's already time for the dropkicks with all three heels (Starr and company) getting knocked outside. Starr offers ACH a free chop but gets hit low for his efforts with Konley getting one of his own. Lee blocks it though and a double superkick puts ACH on the floor. That means Dorada can come in for a triple armdrag and we have some heel miscommunication. Lee: "WHAT IN THE F***** F*** WAS THAT???" You can imagine the laugh that line got.

None of the villains can do a thing with Dorada, who grabs a headscissors on Konley but spins around him ten times before sending him down. Elgin takes a lap around the ring as Dorada collapses, finally allowing Lee to get in a hard shot on Dorada. I believe Dorada takes a thumb to the eye (the camera work is shaky at best and the arena is already dark so it can be a bit difficult to follow some of the action) and all three villains come in for some rhythmic clapping and a triple crotch to the face.

That actually doesn't have any effect on Dorada so it's a triple low blow and a hot tag to Elgin. Konley and Lee get suplexed at the same time and a Falcon Arrow gets two. That's not enough strength so he German suplexes Konley and Lee at the same time for a bonus. ACH, now in a hat, remembers that he's in the match as everything breaks down. Dorada is launched over the top onto all three but ACH's followup dive is countered with a superkick. Not that it matters as ACH grabs a brainbuster, setting up Dorada's moonsault for the pin on Konley at 11:53.

Rating: B. About halfway through this match, I knew this show was going to be a blast. This was the perfect choice for an opener with the heels really just being there to give the fun good guys something to do, which made this feel a lot more fun than serious.

That's likely to be the case with everything tonight and there's nothing wrong with that.

The winners dance post match with Elgin doing the Worm.

Shane Strickland vs. ???

Strickland is better known as Killshot in Lucha Underground. The lights go out and we've got a surprise opponent with.....Low Ki. This was a punch to the stomach for me as I'm REALLY not a fan of Low Ki so hopefully this one doesn't last too long. The announcers basically say Strickland is screwed here and I can't imagine we're in for much of an upset. Feeling out process to start with Low Ki working on the arm and kicking Shane away. I have a feeling you'll hear that more than once tonight. Say ten to fifteen times for a low number.

Strickland starts cranking on both arms to take over as the announcers praise Laycool with Low Ki's success. DeRosa: "Somewhere in a parallel universe Killshot is wrestling Kaval." We go to a test of strength with Strickland being driven down into a bridge. That just earns himself a hard kick to break things up, followed by even more kicks for two. Things slow down as Low Ki grabs a headscissors before chopping the heck out of Strickland's chest.

Back up and Low Ki flips him into the ropes, setting off one heck of a counter sequence capped off by Strickland spinning around Low Ki and nailing a dropkick. Strickland has to bail out of a flip dive but lands on his feet, only to eat a hard dropkick through the ropes. Back in and Strickland easily counters a waistlock (likely because it's a waistlock) into a catapult but Low Ki bounces right back off the ropes into a middle rope double stomp. Strickland won't stay down though and comes back with a 619, followed by a jumping cutter (Strickland: "GOTCHA!") for two.

A slingshot double stomp to the back gives Shane two and the announcers seemed stunned that Low Ki is in trouble. Both guys head up top at the same time and there's no way this is going to end well. Strickland gets knocked down into a Tree of Woe over the apron, setting up a HUGE double stomp to the chest (think Del Rio's bad finisher done well) onto the apron. Low Ki throws what used to be Strickland back inside for the pin at 13:03.

Rating: C+. Like I said, I'm certainly not a Low Ki fan but this was a VERY hard hitting match and the ending looked awesome. Strickland

isn't someone you see very often (save for Lucha Underground of course) and he got to show off quite a bit here. You knew there was going to be a kick based match on the card somewhere and this is as good of a place as you're going to get.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Jeff Cobb vs. Lashley

Lashley is defending and the fans IMMEDIATELY break into a F*** THAT OWL chant. Cobb is better known as Matanza in Lucha Underground but he's just a big athletic monster here. Now for the oddest part of the show, Lashley is announced and a country song comes on. There's no Lashley so they hit his entrance again and he's still not here. Fans: "F*** THAT OWL!"

Lashley appears through the crowd and we're ready to go. I actually got to talk to Lashley the next day at WrestleCon and there was a very simple explanation: they didn't have his song for some reason so he came to the ring anyway, knowing he was going to be the heel no matter what. Apparently it's a BIG offense if you come out to someone else's music so Lashley wasn't about to make his entrance to the country song.

We get some Big Match Intros and Cobb holds up the title to really rub it in. Fans: "F*** THAT HEADBAND!" The good thing is that Lashley is really soaking it all in and relishing the whole thing, as he almost has to do. Lashley goes for a single leg takedown but Cobb muscles him up onto his shoulders to block. A hard shoulder drops Cobb and it's time to slowly pound away in the corner.

Cobb gets in a clothesline to send Lashley outside but the champ whips him into the barricade, only to stop to argue with a fan. Back in and a neckbreaker sets up a chinlock as this is going really, really slowly. Lashley shows off a bit with a delayed vertical suplex, only to have Cobb muscles him up with a throw of his own.

It's off to a triangle choke on Cobb...who lifts him up for a powerbomb to break. That's the kind of thing they needed to do all match. Cobb gets athletic with a standing moonsault followed by a standing shooting star press for two. A deadlift German suplex gives Cobb two more but the spear just ends him for the pin at 10:45.

Rating: D+. This was ok but really felt like a major disappointment. It was billed as and should have been a battle of two monsters hitting each other really hard but instead it was more of a technical power match. You don't see those very often and it made

for a pretty slow match which didn't work very well. Not horrible by any means but it could have, and should have, been better.

Sammy Guevara/Flip Gordon vs. Angelico/Jack Evans

I actually hadn't heard of Guevara and Gordon, both of whom are apparently pretty talented guys from the northeast. Angelico might be my favorite guy from Lucha Underground so this was one of the matches I was looking forward to the most. Gordon and Angelico start things off with Angelico handling the early flipping. A roll through into an ankle lock sends Flip over to the ropes so it's time for some handstand dancing. As is so often the case you see.

Gordon won't shake his hand but he will bring in Guevara to face Evans. Jack wants a mic but can't get one that works. Instead he just shouts a lot, saying that he can't believe he's getting to wrestle Justin Bieber (who Sammy resembles). Evans even offers to lay down if Sammy will sing a bit. That just gets him a superkick because it's been too long since we've had one.

Sammy and Flip start stomping away in the corner, followed by a standing moonsault followed by a standing shooting star for two. Guevara gets a running start and flip dives onto Angelico and Evans for a nice pop despite being the heels here. Back in and we hit some fireman's carry squats on Evans, who quickly reverses into an ankle lock.

Sammy shouts that he has a good one and grabs a crossface chickenwing. That goes as far as it's going to go without Marty Scurll involved so Evans goes up top for a double Blockbuster. The hot tag brings in Angelico for the long legged knee shots as everything breaks down. Everyone kicks everyone until Evans does a ridiculous flip dive to the floor, leaving Angelico to hit the Fall of the Angels for the pin on Gordon at 13:02.

Rating: B-. Gordon and Guevara looked GREAT here and I could easily see them being a heel team in either NXT or TNA. Evans and Angelico were the bigger names coming in and while I'm a fan of the latter, I thought they were outshined here. Good match and I had a lot more fun watching it the second time around.

Hands are shaken post match.

Team Ricochet vs. Team Ospreay

Ricochet, Jason Cade, Sami Calihan, AR Fox, Desmond Xavier

Will Ospreay, Lio Rush, Drew Galloway, Ryan Smile, Marty Scurll

The ten man tag has become a staple of WrestleCon weekend and this might have been the most anticipated match of the show, if not the entire weekend. It's fallout from the infamous match earlier in the year that saw the captains do an incredible match with all kinds of choreography. Just a hunch but I have a feeling that it's going to be a lot more of the same here. The teams were only partially announced in advance and the members weren't announced in the arena so this was a bit confusing.

Ricochet charges at Ospreay and they're on the floor less than three seconds in. Everyone other than Scurll and Calihan join them less than fifteen seconds in before it's off to Smile and Xavier for a double headbutt. They're FLYING in and out of here so I'm not even going to be able to try to call everything here. Cade DDTs Smile to the floor but Galloway comes in and launches the much smaller Cade into the corner for some chops.

Fox tries some springboards on Galloway but gets thrown down in a big crash. Rush comes in to speed things up even more with those rapid fire kicks of his, only to have Sami come in with a cat mask on. Apparently it's called space cat and as Rush says, "I F***** HATE SPACE CAT!". Ospreay comes in and rips the mask off, only to have Ricochet come in as well. Now, I don't usually do this, but I flat out admit I can't do the following justice. Therefore, just watch.

And the version I filmed myself for a bit of a different angle.

Some of you might not get this and that's fine but that's for you Sally. I wish you could have seen it.

Anyway, we're down to Ricochet vs. Scurll in the ring (for the second time tonight after their great match at the Rev Pro show) for all of five seconds before Cade and Smile come in for HUGE dives to take out a pile of people each. Ospreay gets superkicked by Cade and Xavier who follow it up with stereo flip dives out to the floor.

Fox goes even crazier with a springboard imploding 450, thankfully not killing himself when his head bangs into the barricade. Now it's Galloway with a running flip dive (Marty: "He can dance! He can fly!") but the captains won't be outdone, meaning it's Ospreay taking Ricochet to the top. Me from the crowd: "Oh they're going to die." Ospreay hits a HUGE C4 onto the eight others and everyone is

of course out cold.

Back in and it's Cade being put on top of a Tower of Doom with the superplex sending him into a sitout powerbomb from Galloway. Marty gets all fired up for the chickenwing on Calihan...who punches him in the face instead. Team Ricochet gets up first and puts four opponents in a corner each, only to charge into four stereo boots. They come back with superkicks but they all get stuck on top with their heads tucked on the buckles.

That means stereo superkicks, followed by everyone missing charges and taking similar superkicks of their own. We're still not done yet though as Team Ospreay is down in front of a corner as four members of Team Ricochet goes up top. We get a completely ridiculous quadruple dive off the top (shooting stars and 450s you see) with Calihan hitting something like a package Tombstone on Galloway for a quintuple near fall and a huge gasp from the crowd.

The announcers talk about how Dave Meltzer is in the crowd tonight and needs another notebook from Walgreens, which is probably the fourth plug of the night for the store. Seriously it's a great Walgreens. With nothing else left, it's time for a long exchange of strikes, starting with six straight superkicks just because they can. Then they upgrade things a bit with a series of Diamond Cutters, including Smile blocking ones by just putting his hands out.

Rush jumps into his and does Orton's pose on the ropes. Calihan flashes the Diamond Cutter sign and pulls Rush down (Marty: "Calihan yoga classes tomorrow morning!"), only to eat a Stunner, complete with middle fingers, from Galloway. It's back to the Diamond Cutters, capped off by Ricochet going to the top but getting caught in a crazy springboard cutter from Ospreay.

Everyone goes after Ricochet with Galloway hitting a piledriver to set up a dog pile pin. Four people dive in for a save at two and this somehow keeps going. Fox and Ospreay slug it out until Scurll snaps AR's fingers. You really can hear the noise in the arena and it's impossible to not cringe. Calihan powerbombs Smile but gets dropped by Galloway.

It's back to Ospreay vs. Ricochet with their series of counters until Will hits the Stundog Millionaire (spinning Stunner) into a springboard cutter....for two. Excalibur: "Why would that be it?

We're having too much fun!" Ospreay hits a 630 but walks into a Canadian Destroyer from Cade. Jason follows it up with a West Coast Pop to FINALLY put Ospreay away at 22:05.

Rating: A+. Much like the match, this might be a bit long. I've been accused, and probably accurately so, of being a bit of a wrestling snob at times. It's certainly true that I do tend to go a bit too hard towards the artistic side of wrestling where I need things to make sense and follow a logical progression or I get a bit annoyed at it. During and after this match, I started thinking about something.

In addition to being obsessed with wrestling, I'm also something of a movie geek (by last count I've seen I've seen just shy of 1400). I love old movies with the big sets and big performances but I'm also never going to miss a James Bond movie or anything from Marvel. Of course there's stuff in there that doesn't make a bit of sense sometimes but that's completely missing the point. Those movies mainly exist to entertain and just be awesome. Now why can't that be the case with wrestling as well?

I loved this match and after watching more live wrestling over the course of about a week than I had in my entire life, this was the match that stuck with me the most. This was incredible stuff with ten guys doing everything from action to comedy to emotion in more time than almost anything else got all night.

Of all the shows and all the matches I've ever been to in my life, I have never had more fun watching a single match than this one, including anything from any Wrestlemania I've ever been to. I got completely lost in this match and I nearly collapsed when it was finally over. Outstanding stuff here and a total blast, which is a lot more than I was expecting from what looked to be just another spot fest. Find this match if you can and just have fun watching some wrestling.

The fans chant ALL THESE GUYS as all ten sit in the ring and shake hands. Ricochet gets the mic and says that one year ago today, a British wrestler named Chris Travis passed away. That was a big deal at the Rev Pro show and it clearly meant a lot to them. As for this match, the captains actually got to pick their guys and it's clear who is on Ricochet's team because all of his guys are black (not quite) and all of Ospreay's guys are British (Rush, from Baltimore:

"Ello governor!"). Ricochet thanks everyone, including Vader, who he certainly loves.

Intermission, during which I met most of the people on the card so far, plus several who haven't been on the show yet. I also ran to the fabled Walgreens and bought two big bottles of water because there were well over 1,000 people in a hotel conference room. That and the fact that a can of soda was SIX DOLLARS at the concession stand. I also saw Donovan Dijak watching the show as a fan, which is something you almost never see outside of something like this. The video actually includes intermission, which is just a still shot of the ring with no sound.

Ironman Heavymetalweight Title: Battle Royal

Now THIS was a treat. I've heard of this title for years but it's almost always been in Japan. Basically it's a parody of the Hardcore Title as it's defended in battle royals but someone always jumps the champ after it's over to win the title. Now I know that sounds like something you would see in WWE but oh not quite.

The belt has changed hands well over 1200 times (including once via dream sequence) with champions including a sex doll, a cameraman, a baseball bat, a ladder, the title itself, a young girl with the power to chokeslam adults, Vince McMahon's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (someone was in a hold and tapped out on it, which meant that they tapped out to the star) and of course Joey Ryan, who is defending here.

This is basically a Royal Rumble with one minute intervals and the title can change hands via pinfall or submission. However, pins and submissions don't count as eliminations and the only way to be eliminated is by being thrown over the top. Got all that? Good as I want to see Joey come out to the Pina Colada Song because it fits him so perfectly.

Colt Cabana is in #2 and we have one minute intervals. Here's how this thing starts: Bell, Joey: "Touch my d***!" Instead Cabana pulls out some chest hair, which you can see fall out of his hand. A low blow has no effect on Joey so the fans chant KING OF DONG STYLE. Thankfully Kikutaro, a Japanese comedy character, is in at #3 and tries to go in slow motion. A Shining Wizard gets two on Joey and they take turns kicking Joey low, only to keep hurting themselves. The Underground Luchador is in at #4 and there's no hiding the fact

that it's Matt Striker. Luchador rolls Ryan up for the pin and the title before revealing himself to be, in fact, Matt Striker. Kikutaro grabs him low and spins around so Joey can eliminate him, meaning he's the new champion. The Manscout Jake Manning is in at #5 and goes to the corner to read his scout manual. Everyone charges at him but he raises his boot every time without looking away.

It's time for #6 and Welcome to the Jungle starts playing. Excalibur: "This could literally be any indy wrestler from twenty years ago." It winds up being George South of all people and the fans....don't seem to care. For those of you who don't know, South is a former NWA jobber who Ric Flair thought he could have a classic with if they were given time. That never happened but South is kind of a mini legend as a result.

Suicide (apparently played by Caleb Konley) is in at #7 and the fans don't like the owl again. As you might be able to guess, there's nothing to the wrestling here as this is all about the entrances and wondering who comes out next. Speaking of which, Mr. Hughes is in at #8 with no music and missing about 140lbs. South is eliminated off camera and it's Zane Riley in at #9. He's a big guy named Mr. 305 Live and grabs various people by the tights. 2 Cold Scorpio (one of the reasons I wanted to go to this show) is in at #10, thankfully rocking the Flash Funk gear.

Billy Gunn of all people is in at #11, complete with his most famous song. Riley takes a Fameasser and gets tossed, followed by Kikutaro, Manning and Cabana. Moose is in at #12 and we have Moose, Gunn, Hughes, Scorpio and Ryan at the moment. We get something of a bizarre staredown between Gunn and Moose, which Marty describes as the staredown he never knew he wanted.

Nothing happens until Swoggle is in at #13 as I wonder if this counts as a DX reunion. Swoggle is shoved down so Moose and Gunn can fight with Moose scoring off a dropkick. Shane Douglas, unfortunately not in a Target uniform and thankfully not in gear, is in at #14. Gunn gets rid of Hughes and Swoggle low bridges Suicide out. Kevin Thorn is in at #15 to scare Swoggle half to death. Shannon Moore is in at #16 but Gunn drops him with a side slam.

Hurricane is in at #17, complete with the full WWE entrance, to a huge reaction. That means chokeslams, including one to get rid of Thorn. Another one plants Gunn but he can't lift up Billy's dead

weight. Abyss is in at #18 to get rid of Shane as Gunn was tossed off camera. Another chokeslam is enough to get rid of Scorpio before Hurricane's chokeslam is swatted away.

Gangrel is in at #19, complete with that still rocking entrance music. Moore and Helms use the power of 3 Count to get rid of Abyss as Gangrel spits the liquid. A clothesline actually gets rid of Hurricane as Swoggle hits a pop up powerbomb on Moore. Marty Jannetty is in at #20 and Jake Roberts might be passed on the "how out of it can you be while still working a match" scale. I actually got to shake Marty's hand in the lobby during intermission and mentioned that we had the same birthday. He didn't actually say anything but just walked away....without letting go of my hand.

Anyway we have a final group of Ryan, Gangrel, Jannetty, Moore, Moose, and Swoggle. Marty starts dancing as Moore is tossed out. To make sure you know how bad it is, Jannetty takes Gangrel down and the announcers can't keep straight faces over how gone he is. The fans think Marty is wasted (DeRosa: "That chant was true twelve hours ago." Excalibur: "We're going to have to have Sting come out here and give him a DDT to pin him.") and Gangrel throws him out to get us down to four. Moose gets rid of Gangrel and starts the pump jabs on Ryan.

I'm not going to try to spin what happens next so here's as literal of a play by play as I can give: Joey grabs Moose's hand and puts it on his crotch, which causes Moose extreme pain. Moose goes down, tries to Hulk Up, gets cranked right back down, and is tossed out of the ring, all due to the power of Joey's crotch. Swoggle runs up and throws Joey out for the win and the title at 25:00.

Rating: D. I think you can grasp (like Moose grasped Joey) that this wasn't about the wrestling or the action but just getting some older wrestlers (I hesitate to call most of these people legends) out there and wondering who was coming through the curtain next. The anticipation here was outstanding and I really did have a great time finding out who they were dragging out of mothballs for each entrance. It doesn't hold up but this is the definition of a thousand times more fun live than watching it later.

Joey grabs a rollup to get the title back less than thirty seconds later. Since we need something else to get fired up about, Joey makes the mistake of saying he's the greatest champion of all time

and issues an open challenge. In a moment that actually made me jump to my feet in shock.....ENTER SANDMAN starts up and we get the full on ECW entrance, complete with beer, cigarettes and the fans singing the song. I wasn't a huge ECW fan but I LOVED the Sandman's entrance so this was one of the coolest moments of my entire weekend.

Sandman drinks a lot of beer with the announcers ensuring us that he has personally checked every ID in the building. Excalibur gets to the obvious question: WHY IS RYAN STILL IN THE RING? Now it's off to the other side of the arena with Sandman actually holding a full twelve pack of beer. At least you know it's going to be a long entrance. Excalibur: "This entrance has lasted longer than Marty Jannetty's sobriety!" Sandman gets in the ring, offers Joey a beer, and canes him in the head for the pin and the title.

And of course a fight breaks out as Sandman leaves.

Brian Cage vs. Johnny Mundo

This is a TLC match for no apparent reason with Melissa Santos and Taya Valkyrie as the respective seconds/girlfriends (both looking great). Melissa even does Cage's entrance for a little Lucha Underground flavor. The announcers immediately start making fun of Lucha Underground's, shall we say, hit and miss taping schedule as Cage misses a charge to start. Mundo misses a dive but hits the Flying Chuck for two.

We get the first chair but Cage snaps off a release German suplex instead. Something like a Van Daminator knocks Cage outside so Johnny can spit on a fan. Taya gets in a few stomps of her own as Johnny goes over to find a ladder. Mundo throws it at Cage to send him into the chair as we're somehow five minutes into this.

The ladder is laid across the middle rope so Johnny can jump over it, only to have Cage dropkick it into his ribs. A backdrop sends Mundo into the ladder again and it's FINALLY time for a table. Cage takes too long going up though, allowing Taya to grab his foot. Mundo gets knocked to the floor so Taya tries a hurricanrana....right in front of a table. One heck of a superbomb ends Taya so Mundo, without checking on Taya for very long, completely misses Starship Pain onto the ladder onto Cage.

We get another table set up in the corner but Cage is up and holding a chair. Ever the villain, Mundo grabs Melissa for a distraction so he can kick Cage low. For the first time that I can ever remember,

Melissa gets physical with a kick to the head, earning herself the safest spear through a table ever as Johnny turns around, basically driving himself through instead. Cage is livid and basically murders Johnny with a Steiner Screwdriver onto the chair for the pin at 14:05.

Rating: D. Easily the weakest match of the night here, mainly because it was billed as a TLC match. This would have been better off as a street fight or something like that as the ladder was barely ever used (not climbed once) and the rest of the weapons were just kind of there. It wasn't so much bad as much as it was really disappointing, which is often a much worse case scenario.

We pause to clean the ring a bit before the main event with the broom guy getting a nice ovation. He even poses a bit because everyone is a ham at this show.

Hardys vs. Lucha Bros

That would be Pentagon El Cero M (Pentagon Dark in other words) and Rey Fenix, another pair of real life brothers and the PWG Tag Team Champions. The Hardys get an incredible reaction (as incredible as you're going to get at nearly 12:30 at night) as they might not be playing the Broken Hardys....but they're playing the Broken Hardys. The anti-owl chants begin again as we have the Big Match Intros. This turns into dueling DELETE/CERO MIEDO (zero fear, Pentagon's catchphrase) chants and for a little while, Cero Miedo is actually a bit stronger.

The dueling chants continue after the bell until the Lucha Bros take over with some kicks to the face. Pentagon picks Fenix up in a wheelbarrow slam but gets flipped forward into a 450 onto Matt in a cool spot. A double low blow gets two on Jeff but Fenix eats a Side Effect for the same. Matt and Pentagon clothesline each other and all four are down. Pentagon heads outside but Fenix misses a dive and takes his brother out by mistake.

That means a dive from Jeff to take both of them out and all four are down again. Back in and stereo Twists of Fate give the Hardys two before Pentagon loads Fenix up in a Gory Bomb but jumps forward for a backsplash/splash combo. There's the Twist of Fate to Pentagon, followed by another to Fenix to bring him down onto his brother. The Swanton to both Brothers gives Jeff the pin at 7:22.

Rating: D+. The time killed this one and there's no way around it.

The show was pushing four hours at this point, meaning it was almost 1am. Couple that with the ten man tag and the battle royal and there was almost no way that anyone, even the Hardys, could make this work. They were probably smart to keep the match short as I don't think the fans would have been able to handle anything that much longer.

The announcers sign off but Matt grabs the mic and say these are the fans that make wrestling great. They come here to get good wrestling and that's what they get. Matt says the future of tag wrestling is safe with teams like the Lucha Bros, the Young Bucks and the Briscoe Brothers. If companies try to get rid of teams like them, they'll fade away and classify themselves as obsolete. Fenix thanks the crowd and the Hardys to finally end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is a show where the right expression is "you got what you paid for". The Supershow isn't about angles or stories, but rather bringing together some of the top indy talent in the world for one show in a series of dream matches. I can easily get why this show wouldn't be for every wrestling fan but if you just love having fun with wrestling, there's almost no way you won't have fun with this. I'll definitely be taking this in every year and it was a major highlight of the weekend. Go out of your way to see the ten man tag and just have a good time watching the show.

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Monday Night Raw – May 1, 2017: The Two Fisted Problem

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 1, 2017

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're past Payback and that means things can finally start settling down around here. The big story continues to be Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman with Strowman beating the injured Reigns clean last night. Extreme Rules is in just over a month and an ambulance match would seem to be the next logical step. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The women's division is in the ring with a pedestal in the middle and here's Alexa Bliss for her coronation as the new champion. Bliss thanks everyone for being here tonight, even if Kurt Angle forced them to be here. The Queen is gone is gone but not to worry because the Goddess is here. These women are an inspiration, including Mickie James, despite her contemporaries Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah having moved on to a better place.

As for Sasha, she's the woman that Alexa beat to get where she is today. Sasha glares at her and Bliss backs into Nia. Bliss: "We're good. We're good." Alexa gets on the pedestal and laughs at Bayley for losing in front of all her family last night. At least now Bayley's nephews will have someone to look up to. The brawl starts in a hurry and we take a break.

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Emma/Alicia Fox vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke/Mickie James

Alexa hides from Bayley to start so it's Emma forearming Bayley in the back instead. Mickie comes in and starts on the arm before it's

off to Alicia vs. Dana with Brooke scoring off a running cartwheel splash. Bayley works on Alicia's arm as they're tagging in and out at a very fast pace.

Fox sends Banks outside and it's a big staredown on the floor. Back with Nia throwing Sasha around and dropping an elbow for two. Bliss comes back in for some boot choking but Sasha avoids a charge. The hot tag brings in Bayley to take Alexa down and send her into the buckle ten straight times. Everything breaks down with everyone brawling to the floor, leaving Bliss to rake Bayley's eyes, setting up a DDT for the pin at 14:03.

Rating: C-. There's only so much you can do when you have eight people in there at the same time. With so many people floating around, especially people who don't have anything to do at the moment, you're not going to be able to really showcase anything other than a single feud. Bliss pinning Bayley is a good idea and I'm really glad they didn't go with the lame idea of the champion losing her first match after winning the title.

Enzo Amore vs. Luke Gallows

Enzo says they have bags underneath their eyes (they're Gucci) because their real life is better than their dreams. Anderson and Gallows jump them from behind though and we take a break before the bell. The match is joined in progress with Gallows working on the arm. Enzo avoids a charge in the corner though and scores with some kicks to the face, only to uppercut Amore's head off. Another shot staggers Gallows and Amore goes up, only to have Anderson offer a distraction. The flapjack gives Luke the pin at 5:30.

Rating: D. I am so bored with this feud as I can't even remember why they're fighting in the first place. Enzo and Cass aren't exactly the most thrilling team in the world at this point and I don't see that changing anytime soon. The Enzo schtick is starting to get old in a hurry as we have to wait a few minutes so he can say the exact same thing every single week. Then again the fans still react to it so at least it does serve a purpose, unlike this feud that doesn't seem like it's ever going to end.

Neville tells TJ Perkins to stay focused.

Here's Seth Rollins to talk about how he's persevered through everything and is doing everything he's wanted to do. Now though, he wants the Beast. Cue Finn Balor to say while Rollins has done a lot, he's the one armed man who became the first ever Universal Champion. Remember that Seth?

Dean Ambrose comes out to say he wants part of the fight but here's Miz to say he's awesome and Balor is a coward. Miz talks about being a threat until all three tell him to shut up at the same time. Dean asks who wants to see someone beat up the Miz and pulls out his phone to call Kurt. With the call over, Dean says Kurt has made Miz vs. Balor vs. Rollins with the winner getting an Intercontinental Title match.

We look back at last night's main event.

Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar vs. Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher

The good guys all have umbrellas for their entrances. Tozawa kicks Kendrick in the face to start but Nese runs him over without much effort. Everything breaks down in a hurry and the villains are sent outside, leaving everyone else to pose. Back with Tozawa in trouble at the hands of all three heels.

Tozawa finally gets in a kick and makes the hot tag off to Swann. Rich speeds things way up and hits a running flip ax kick (Booker: "Like a Harlem Hangover!") followed by a running 450. Everything breaks down with Gallagher and Kendrick being left alone in the ring. The Captain's Hook is broken up and Jack hits the running dropkick for the pin at 10:34.

Rating: C+. This got MUCH better after the commercial and made me less annoyed after thinking it was the old "throw them into one match" concept. At this point 205 Live needs something to be built up other than the main event so having six guys go out there looking good is one of the best things that can be done.

We look back at Sheamus and Cesaro turning heel last night.

Here are Sheamus (who Graves correctly identifies as looking like Travis Bickle) and Cesaro for their explanation. Sheamus is tired of living in a fog where he had to pretend to like the fans. They were ready to take their titles back at Wrestlemania but then the Hardys were thrown in for the nostalgia reaction.

That moment didn't last long though because it was just a novelty. Now they're ready to dominate again, as only they can. Cesaro and Sheamus go to leave but here are the Hardys to cut them off. Matt talks about being banged up from last night's post match ambush but their response is DELETE. The champs chase them off.

Miz is ready to get his Intercontinental Title back but Ambrose comes in to ask if Miz's hair gel gets in his eyes when he wrestles. Miz leaves so "Mean" Dean Ambrose throws it back to Bobby and Gene at ringside.

Heath Slater vs. Apollo Crews

This is over Titus being annoyed that Slater gave Crews advice on being a new father. Crews takes him to the mat to start and Slater is already in over his head. A headscissors doesn't get Heath anywhere as Crews nips up for a staredown. Crews misses a charge in the corner though and we get a Titus vs. Rhyno staredown (Perhaps over Main Event issues from last week? I know you know what I'm talking about.). Back in and Crews hits an enziguri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin at 3:46.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what you would expect from these two and that's not a good thing. I know Titus seems like a death sentence for Crews but you have to go somewhere with him so it's not like he has anywhere to go but up. Not a good match or anything but it's getting Crews on TV, which is a good thing for him.

Here's Angle to talk about Reigns vs. Strowman. Last night's matches had consequences with Reigns re-injuring his ribs and Strowman tearing his rotator cuff. Kurt has been thinking about this all day but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray is here as a savior after rising from his own ashes with burnt wings. Angle says this is his ring but Bray says it's his world.

Dean interviews Rollins because there are cameras in the locker room and therefore there must be an interview. After listing off some potential names, Dean asks if Rollins would like an Intercontinental Title shot. Tensions are teased but Dean throws it back to Gorilla before it goes too far.

Austin Aries vs. TJ Perkins

They trade shots in the corner to start until Aries hits one heck of a shot to the jaw. Perkins comes right back by tying him in the Tree of Woe for a running dropkick to the knee to put Aries in trouble. Back from a break with Perkins putting on a butterfly lock, followed by a springboard spinning forearm for two. Aries' knee is too banged up to be thrown across the ring and his shoulder hits the post to make it even worse.

TJ doesn't even let him fall down before he grabs a half crab in the ropes. Aries comes right back though by kicking TJ to the floor for the suicide dive. The middle rope elbow to the back gets two but the knee gives out again. TJ tries the Detonation Kick, only to have Aries reverse into the Last Chancery for the tap at 11:20.

Rating: B-. The wrestling was good but the important thing was building up the Last Chancery as a potential finisher. If you're just going to have Aries use the move over and over, at some point it has to actually beat someone. Even if he only wins one or two matches with it, the idea is that he can do it again, which makes it an effective finisher.

Post match Perkins puts Aries in the kneebar to leave him laying.

Ambrose interviews Balor and suggests eating a carb. Balor takes a bite of a doughnut before heading to the ring but is replaced by the Drifter, who seems to confuse Ambrose.

Golden Truth's request for a Tag Team Title shot is turned down as they don't have the best win/loss record. Angle will however put them in a Tag Team Turmoil match next week, which seems to work fine.

Last night, Angle said goodbye to Chris Jericho after he won the US

Title, sending him to Smackdown.

Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor vs. The Miz

The winner is #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title. Miz heads to the floor like the coward he is so it's Balor vs. Rollins to start. Neither of them seem that interested in fighting though as they keep looking at Miz before finally heading out after him. He finally gets caught and tries to fight, only to be kicked out to the floor.

We get Rollins vs. Balor again but Miz pulls Finn to the floor and hides Maryse so Seth can't hit a dive. All three get back inside, only to have Miz shoves Seth off the top for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Balor elbowing out of Miz's chinlock until Rollins tries a high crossbody but lands on his head. Thankfully he's right back up but Miz sends him into Balor to put Finn down on the floor.

Both good guys take kicks to the chest until Finn throws Miz at Rollins for a DDT but dropkicks Seth down at the same time. They head outside with Balor hitting some HARD kicks to the face (Graves: "Who knew that in twenty four hours the Irish would revolutionize dentistry?"), followed by 1916 for a near fall on Rollins. Balor gets crotched against the post and Miz's low DDT gets two on Seth. Miz starts kicking at the bad knee to set up the Figure Four on Rollins but Balor makes the save.

They trade kicks to the face with Seth getting a near fall of his own. A double Blockbuster sets up a frog splash on Balor and Seth can't believe the kickout. Rollins runs the corner for the superplex into the Falcon Arrow on Miz but here's Samoa Joe to Rock Bottom him on the floor. Not that it matters as Balor is up with the Sling Blade and Coup de Grace....but here's Wyatt to shove him off the top. Sister Abigail lays Finn out and Miz steals the pin at 22:25.

Rating: A-. Now that's how you book a match. With the World Title scene basically on hold until July, this set up the Intercontinental Title as a much bigger deal that three former World Champions are fighting over. It also helps set up Balor vs. Wyatt and Rollins vs.

Joe, which should be two major headlining feuds over the next few weeks until Reigns and Strowman are back.

Overall Rating: C. This show suffered from two problems. First of all is the lack of anything on top as the champion is gone and the two main eventers are both out selling injuries. While that's a good idea and necessary, it makes for a very, very long night. It's not helping when this is the night after a pay per view, which automatically makes things feel long. We're looking at seven plus hours of wrestling in two days and that's a bit much to take. Couple that with a show where they were clearly filling in a lot of time and it's still good enough but it felt like it went on for about four days.

Results

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Alicia Fox/Emma b. Dana Brooke/Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James – DDT to Bayley

Luke Gallows b. Enzo Amore – Flapjack

Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher b. Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar – Running dropkick to Kendrick

Apollo Crews b. Heath Slater – Toss Powerbomb

Austin Aries b. TJ Perkins – Last Chancery

Miz b. Seth Rollins and Finn Balor – Pin after Sister Abigail from Bray Wyatt

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

Payback 2017: Thank You Strowman! And Reigns. Rollins Too. Throw in Joe. Maybe Jericho?

Payback 2017

Date: April 30, 2017

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

And now, the most oddly booked, unnecessary and likely meaningless pay per view of the year! We're four weeks removed from Wrestlemania and somehow it seems like a far more distant memory. This was going to be your run of the mill rematch pay per view but the Superstar Shakeup has rendered a lot of the top matches worthless. Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt is now non-title while Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho haven't interacted in weeks. Fun for everyone you see. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass talk about Chinese food and say that Anderson and Gallows' fortune cookie will call them sawft. Amore pounds on Anderson to start and hits a running kick to the ribs. The offense doesn't last long though as Gallows kicks him down and works on the arm until we go to a break.

Back with Anderson breaking up a hot tag attempt at the last minute, only to have the second attempt work a few seconds later. Cass starts cleaning house with the corner splashes, only to have Enzo make a blind tag. Gallows pulls him off the apron a second later for a big crash but Cass breaks up the Magic Killer. A small package

finishes Gallows at 6:39.

Rating: D+. This was only there so Enzo and Cass could fire the crowd up and there's nothing wrong with that. What there is something wrong with is how lifeless this feud has been over the last few weeks that it's dragged along. Enzo and Cass really could have used the Revival for their next feud but instead we're stuck here thanks to injury. Not bad but really not interesting.

We're not done on the Kickoff Show as we have MizTV with special guest Finn Balor. Miz asks what the deal is with the long entrance and Finn says it's the Balor Club. That doesn't quite make sense as Miz wants to know what it takes to get into the Balor Club. Finn puts it up to the crowd who approve of Maryse but not so much of Miz.

We hear about Balor's success worldwide but Miz thinks Finn might feel like a failure. Balor mentions all the injuries he suffered in a match that he still managed to win and become the Universal Champion (my goodness imagine where his career would be if he didn't win that match). Miz mentions all the time away and asks what's next for Balor. Finn makes it simple: he wants his title back.

Miz brings up Lesnar being the Beast but Balor is ready to fight a bigger man, just like he has for his entire career. A fight is about to break out but Miz hides behind Maryse. Miz isn't worth the beating so Finn goes to leave, only to have Miz call him out. One Sling Blade later and Miz is quickly shut up as Finn destroys the set.

The opening video is a simple look at the matches with a theme of retribution. Nothing special but it's all it needed to be.

US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending after taking the title from Jericho at Wrestlemania. The story would call for a big violent gimmick here but nah, let's just let it be a standard rematch instead with IT'S RAW VS. SMACKDOWN serving as the gimmick instead. Kevin bails to the floor to start and gets sent into the announcers' table to let

Jericho take over. Owens has to roll away from a Jericho dive to the floor but makes the stupid decision to roll back inside, allowing Jericho to hit a top rope elbow to the jaw.

The springboard dropkick is broken up (which should be attributed to Owens being such a big Jericho fan) and Owens nails the Cannonball against the barricade. We hit the chinlock (Owens: "ASK HIM!") as Cole continues running down both guys' resumes. One heck of a clothesline drops Jericho again and it's right back to the chinlock. Back up and Jericho misses a charge but gets in a quick enziguiri for two of his own.

A superkick out of the corner gives Owens two more and the Cannonball is good for the same. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana into the Walls. Owens gets to the ropes by a finger again so Jericho crushes the hand beneath the steps. The bad hand means Owens can't hit the Pop Up Powerbomb so it's back to the Walls...for the tap out and the title at 14:06, sending Jericho over to Smackdown.

Rating: C. The ending helped it a lot (shock value can indeed do good things) but this felt like it was a long stretch of house show level stuff until Jericho started to go after the hand. Changing the title is a good idea though as they needed to do something to get off to a good start instead of having Owens beat a huge crowd favorite. Odds are Jericho loses on Smackdown anyway so it really doesn't mean that much.

Jericho signs a kid's List on the way up the ramp.

Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Austin Aries

Neville is defending in another Wrestlemania rematch where Neville raked the eyes to retain the title. An armdrag and a running shoulder in the corner have Neville flummoxed early on and it's time to lay on the top rope. It's way too early for the 450 though as Neville dropkicks the rope for the break.

We're already in the chinlock for a bit before Aries fights up and hits the middle rope elbow to the back. Aries sends him outside for

a suicide dive, followed by a suplex back inside. A running forearm in the corner looks to set up the 450 but Neville bails out to the floor for safety. Not that it matters as Aries grabs a sunset bomb to set up the Last Chancery. Neville is in trouble but grabs the referee for the DQ at 11:19.

Rating: C+. This was getting good until the ending. I'd assume this sets up a third match at Extreme Rules but they're to the point where Aries almost needs to win the belt. It's still a good feud but this one didn't have anywhere near the steam that the previous one did. I'm not sure they can really drag it out another month but that's never stopped WWE before.

Aries post-match protests don't get him anywhere.

Tag Team Titles: Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Hardys

The Hardys are defending after winning the titles at Wrestlemania in a ladder match. Cesaro and Matt start things off as an OBSOLETE chant starts up. Jeff comes in for a BROTHER NERO chant and it's almost immediately back to Matt. So much for that chant. Cesaro and Sheamus start in on the arm but it's right back to Jeff to speed things up. The legdrop between the legs and a seated dropkick set up the splash for two. Why does no one else ever do that?

Not that it matters as Sheamus sends him hard out to the floor and it's time for the heat segment. Sheamus' middle rope knee gets two and it's off to the chinlock. Back up and Sheamus kicks him in the face with Corey calling him the "alabaster gladiator". It's right back to the chinlock as Jeff seems to have lost a tooth somewhere in there. He's still able to kick Cesaro away and make the hot tag though as things pick up.

A DELETE middle rope elbow sets up the Side Effect for two. Matt's moonsault misses though and it's the Cesaro Swing into the Sharpshooter. A rope is quickly grabbed so Sheamus comes back in for a super White Noise in a great crash. Jeff makes a last second save but Sheamus breaks up the Twist of Fate. Sheamus powerslams Matt but Jeff makes a blind tag and hits the Swanton for the pin to retain at 12:48.

Rating: C. Another Raw match here with the Hardys still needing a real team to feud with, at least until Revival gets back to take the titles away. As has been the case both times tonight, the match was fine though it's nothing that I'm going to remember tomorrow. Matt and Jeff are still good in the ring but they don't quite have the same spark from when they made their return. It's not early enough for a big change, but the Broken stuff needs to happen before it goes too long.

Post match the Hardys shake their hands, only to have Sheamus and Cesaro turn on them and beat them up. If that doesn't set up a rematch with the Broken Hardys at Extreme Rules, nothing is going to.

Braun Strowman promises to hurt Roman Reigns.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Bayley

Bayley is defending in her hometown. Bliss gets slammed to start and a knee drop gets two, followed by a long series of rams into the buckle. Alexa comes right back with a HARD shot to the head and the slow beating begins. As is normally the case, Alexa beats on Bayley and looks extra annoyed while doing so. She gets so much mileage out of her facial expressions. The chinlock is quickly broken so Bliss clotheslines her back down. Bliss spends a bit too much time trash talking though and gets caught in a Stunner over the ropes.

A belly to back suplex gives Bayley two but she takes too much time going to the ropes and gets sent hard into the buckle. Bayley can't get the super Bayley to Belly and gets pulled down with a Code Red for two. Bliss gets kneed in the face though and the Macho Elbow gets two more. A rollup gives Bayley two but the kickout sends her into the post. Bayley is so stunned that a DDT gives Bliss the pin and the title at 11:19.

Rating: C+. So to clarify, Bayley is NOT Naomi and is no better than anyone else that loses in their hometown. Bliss winning is fine but it really does seem that these hometown losses are just there to show that WWE is still in charge. The match was good enough and proof that playing a character well is far more important than what

you can do in the ring. Bliss' in-ring work might not be the best but it's passable enough to be carried by her great mannerisms.

We recap the House of Horrors match, which means we'll finally get to know what the heck it is. The match is non-title due to the Superstar Shakeup but that gives Bray a slight chance of winning, perhaps due to some Jinder Mahal interference. Randy Orton beat Bray Wyatt at Wrestlemania for the title and this is the (meaningless) gimmick rematch.

Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Non-title. The match is going to start in Bray's House of Horrors and will wind up in the ring where it's pinfall, submission or forfeiture. We go to the inside of a limo where Orton is firing himself up and wearing pants. The House of Horrors is an actual house...and a tractor goes by with no one on it. The door is locked so Orton kicks his way in and we start the rapid camera cuts.

Bray's voice says run and he jumps Orton from behind. Randy is thrown into various things as the House of Horrors looks like a not great house that is being renovated. Bray disappears but reaches through a wall to choke Orton for a second and a half. The next room has baby dolls hanging from the ceiling in various mutilated forms and we hear babies talking.

Cue Wyatt for another attack but Orton throws him through a wall. They head to another room with more dolls and some weird structure made of sticks. That goes nowhere so it's off to a kitchen (the refrigerator says WE'RE HERE) with Orton getting the better of it. Bray tries to climb onto a counter and gets in a low blow. The refrigerator is shoved down onto Randy so Bray walks outside and steals Orton's limo. We'll come back to this later.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe. Rollins was injured at Joe's hands earlier this year so tonight is really just about payback. As is often the case, the simpler ideas work best.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

Joe punches him up against the ropes to start and they're quickly on

the floor with Rollins chopping away. Seth hits the big suicide dive and a second one does just as well. The big guy gets smart and goes after the knee before hitting the suicide elbow to send Rollins over the announcers' table. Graves: "Like a flying school bus!"

A backslash onto the knee has Rollins screaming and his comeback is cut off almost immediately. The Knee Capper sets up the kneebar until Seth scrambles to the ropes. Joe grabs a powerbomb into a half crab into the Texas Cloverleaf but Joe is at the ropes again. Seth comes back with a Sling Blade, followed by a superkick to the neck for two of his own.

For some reason Seth tries the Buckle Bomb and the knee gives out, though it's fine enough for a Falcon Arrow a few seconds later. That great looking frog splash bangs the knee up even more so the cover is only good for a delayed two. The Koquina Clutch is countered with a quick rope climb but Joe grabs the hold again, only to have Seth roll over for a cradle and the pin at 16:03.

Rating: B+. It's definitely the match of the night so far which was what most people had coming in. Rollins winning is the right call as it would have been really stupid to give him the win last time and then job him here. Joe dominated the match until the ending where he got caught (ignore his shoulder being up) so this was about as well done as they were going to get.

Wyatt arrives back at the arena and stumbles into the ring. Cue Orton from behind with a chair (no word on how he got back) to start the beatdown, including sending Wyatt over the announcers' tables. There's the Elevated DDT off the table and Orton follows it up with another chair to the back. Back in and the RK0 is loaded up but here are the Singh Brothers to go after Orton. They're dispatched just as quickly and there's the RK0 to Wyatt. Now it's Jinder Mahal with the belt to Orton's head twice in a row, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:22 shown in the ring, not counting about ten minutes in the House.

Rating: D. The house stuff was more stupid than bad and that's a major improvement. They would have been in big trouble if it had

been stuff like they did at Wrestlemania so it was more just there instead of anything all that terrible. Wyatt winning might be a stretch but I'd much rather him actually get a win than lose all over again with the RK0 being the great vanquishing force. Not the best concept here but it's going to be a more forgettable idea than on a list of all time horrible concepts and that's a major victory. We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman destroyed Reigns in an incredible segment but has since gone 0-1-1 against Big Show and Kalisto for reasons that aren't clear. Tonight Reigns is back for revenge.

Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman

Reigns is very banged up coming in. He goes right after Strowman and hits a clothesline off the steps to drop the monster on the floor. The apron kick is pulled out of the air and Strowman chokeslams him onto the announcers' table. A powerslam gets two and Reigns is getting some sympathy for FINALLY being an underdog.

The bad shoulder is sent hard into the steps and it's off to a waistlock back inside. Strowman misses a charge into the corner and Reigns somehow hits a Samoan drop for two. They head outside with Reigns charging at Strowman and managing to send him into the post twice in a row.

The spear gets two back inside (giving us a reaction from a young girl that we'll likely see weekly from now on) but the second attempt hits boot. Two Superman Punches drop Braun but a third is caught in that head and arm choke. The powerslam only gets two so Strowman does it again for the pin at 11:20.

Rating: B+. This was WAY better than I was expecting and Reigns losing is probably the right call. I mean, I really don't need to see him vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania XXXIV but if that's where we just have to go, you have to take Reigns down a few pegs first. Really good power match here and that was easily the way to go.

Post match Strowman throws in some steps (Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!") and drops Reigns ribs first onto the steel in a big

crash. Braun lifts the steps over his head and brings them crashing down onto his ribs in a cringe inducing landing. Strowman is as over as free beer in a frat house and Reigns is bleeding from the mouth (Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!") to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The really low expectations helped this a lot, as did having Jericho win and not having the House of Horrors match be a disaster. The ending was really good and Joe vs. Rollins was quite the match as well. Raw is looking strong, or at least it would if there was anything for these guys to be fighting over. Good show here, though I still wonder how long they can stretch things out with Lesnar not likely wrestling until July.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Kevin Owens – Walls of Jericho

Austin Aries b. Neville via DQ when Neville grabbed the referee

Hardys b. Sheamus/Cesaro – Swanton Bomb to Sheamus

Alexa Bliss b. Bayley – DDT

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe – Cradle

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

Braun Strowman b. Roman Reigns – Powerslam

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Payback 2017 Preview

I've seen every pay per view WWE has ever produced and this is one of the most worthless they've ever put on. The Superstar Shakeup has changed the entire company and that means we have a bunch of pointless matches due to either the title not being on the line, people potentially switching shows and feuds that already have their followups started. Let's get to it.

Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

Normally I do the Kickoff Show match first but I'm going with this just so we can get it out of the way and forget about it. Remember back in 2000 when Mike Awesome defended the ECW World Title against Tazz and it was a WCW wrestler facing a WWF wrestler at an ECW show? That might be less complicated than what we have here. Here we have the Smackdown World Champion facing off against a "Monday Night Raw" wrestler who had no chance of winning the belt back at first and now that this is non-title, the odds are even lower.

The winner here? The audience, as this feud is going to be OVER, meaning we can move on to.....Jinder Mahal. Three months ago AJ Styles and John Cena were tearing the house down over this title and now we have Wyatt looking like the weakest champion in years, Orton drawing reactions of "Him AGAIN?" and Mahal wondering what kind of a saint he was in a past life to be in this spot. I'll go with Orton winning here, presumably by being the first person to figure out what a House of Horrors match is.

Kickoff Show: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

These teams are somehow still feuding for reasons that I have no idea how to comprehend. There's really not much of a reason for them to be fighting anymore so here they are on pay per view. This is a feud where they started fighting at one point and are still fighting because that's all WWE knows how to do.

I'll go with Anderson and Gallows here, as WWE doesn't seem to like Amore and Cass winning. Then again they don't like Anderson and Gallows winning either, but the Hardys are likely going to need some more challengers going forward and the big balds have only lost to the champs once so far. This match really does belong on the Kickoff Show and it's very clear that there isn't much of a reason to have

it other than Amore warming the crowd up.

Women's Title: Bayley vs. Alexa Bliss

This is a natural feud with Bliss looking down on everyone that she's in the ring with and Bayley as the hometown girl who is living the dream. The question here is how important the hometown aspect is going to be. Earlier this month Naomi won the Smackdown Women's Title at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" seemingly on the strength of being from Orlando, Florida. The show is in Bayley's hometown so the question is will they let the hometown girl win twice.

I think they will as it seems that the big match on the horizon is Bayley defending against Sasha Banks in a battle of (former by then) best friends. As good as Bliss is (and she's awesome), there's some real money in Bayley holding the title for several months before losing it to Banks in a big showdown. Bliss will have her day and she's still rolling on the momentum that came with her two Smackdown Women's Titles.

Cruiserweight Title: Austin Aries vs. Neville

They had the Match of the Night at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" and it's not out of the question for them to do it again. These two have an amazing chemistry together and they're going with a different story this time around. In Orlando it was all about Aries being able to hang with and potentially beat Neville, but the last few weeks have been a much more personal feud built on Neville attacking Aries and the hunt for revenge.

This time around though, I think they'll switch the title. Neville hasn't lost a singles match since October and the company has been mentioning that far too often as of late. That suggests to me that they're about to have him lose, which is going to be a huge moment for Aries. He's been treated as the biggest star in the division save for Neville and it's time to bring him all the way to the top.

US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho

Now we hit the first match with next to no drama. It also doesn't help that these two have barely interacted since "Wrestlemania XXXIII" due to the Superstar Shakeup sending Owens over to "Smackdown Live". These two had one of the hottest feuds in the company just a month ago and now it's nothing more than something that exists. Owens has completely moved on and is already looking at

a title defense against AJ Styles later in the month.

Of course I'm going with Owens as Jericho is already booked to head off with Fozzy again almost immediately. Barring a last minute switch to Jericho and then dropping it back to Owens two days later, there's no reason to believe that Owens is dropping the title here. This match feels like filler and that's a real shame given how much effort they put into the build to its predecessor.

Tag Team Titles: Hardys vs. Sheamus/Cesaro

While Jericho vs. Owens feels like it has no steam because of a lack of build, this one feels like it has no steam because it was never anything special in the first place. The Hardys made their huge return earlier this month and...that's about it. Without the Broken characters they're really just a nostalgic act and that's not the most thrilling idea in the world, at least not for too long.

That being said, I'm certainly taking the Hardys to retain here. As much steam as they've lost, Sheamus and Cesaro have all the steam of a frozen lasagna. The only way I can see them winning here is through a good bit of cheating which would send Matt Hardy over the edge to set up a certain gimmick change to set the promotion on as much fire as it could possibly reach in the current environment.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

This is the Match of the Night if they're allowed to let it all hang out. I'd assume this match was scheduled for "Fastlane 2017" before Rollins got hurt (though I'm not sure he actually was, especially given how fast he's gone from nearly crippled to just fine) and now it's going to feel a bit bigger as Rollins actually got a big rub off his win over Triple H. Then again Samoa Joe has been on fire since his main roster debut and there's a real chance he could get the biggest win of his career here.

I think I'll go with Samoa Joe, likely thanks to some interference by a returning Triple H. Why would he return? Well that would be because STEPHANIE MCMAHON MUST BE AVENGED and that means the feud must continue for the next three months or so. So yeah, Rollins is about to win with the Rainmaker knee but Triple H interferes to give Samoa Joe the win, setting up a rematch at whatever the next "Monday Night Raw" pay per view is.

Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman

The last two weeks have made this interesting as WWE has decided that the way to follow up on Strowman's amazing destruction of Reigns is to have him go 0-1-1 against Big Show and Kalisto. There was no way Reigns should have been on TV in the last two weeks and thankfully they've kept him away from TV, though I'm more amazed that him RETIRING THE UNDERTAKER has been forgotten a mere four weeks later.

I'll take Strowman as he seems to be the challenger at "Great Balls of Fire 2017" and...stop laughing at the pay per view name. Anyway, Strowman seems to be the next challenger for Lesnar because we need to wait for a year to set up Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar and that would suggest starting with a major loss here.

Overall.....I think you get the idea. I have no idea why they didn't do the Superstar Shakeup this coming week for the sake of avoiding all of the messes that have come from the whole thing happening eight days after "Wrestlemania XXXIII". Almost none of the matches on this show mean anything as we're already setting up everything for later, making this show all the less important. I'm going to have enough issues staying awake during this show, let alone actually making sense of it.

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