

Lucha Underground – September 7, 2016 (Season 3 Premiere): Picking Up Where We Left Off

Lucha Underground

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Lucha Underground Temple, Boyle Heights, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

We're already back for the third season as the second felt like it ended in a hurry. Last season wrapped up with Dario Cueto being arrested in what felt like a mid-season finale and the very quick return backs up the theory that it wasn't supposed to be the big ending. Hopefully we can get some resolution to the storylines here instead. Let's get to it.

Dario Cueto is exercising in his jail cell when a guard lets him out. He's given his personal objects back.....BY THE HONKY TONK MAN??? I can totally live with this, even if it's just a one off cameo. Dario gets in a limo where Councilman Delgado tells him that the charges have been dropped. The big boss, whoever that is, tells Dario to never waste his time again. Dario looks terrified.

The announcers welcome us to the show with Vampiro saying his only job is being an announcer. I'm sure.

Dario and Matanza are in the ring with the boss announcing Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Pentagon Dark. That should get a bigger build no? That brings Dario to his brother, who has destroyed everyone in his path. Dario has a new toy: Dario's Dial of Doom. It's a big wheel with wrestlers names on it. Whoever it lands on gets to face Matanza, provided they haven't challenged for the title yet. Therefore, Mysterio isn't eligible. It's already time for the first spin.

Lucha Underground Title: Son of Havoc vs. Matanza

Matanza is defending. Havoc starts with the dropkick into the corner but a crossbody just bounces off the monster's chest. A missed charge sends Matanza into the post and out to the floor as Striker compares the champ to Bruno Sammartino and Joe Louis. Havoc follows him out with an elbow around the post for a low blow as Matanza is already selling WAY more than usual, which is a good sign going forward. Dario is worried about his brother and says this should be baby food.

Back up and Matanza slams him down to set up a standing moonsault. A guillotine choke has Matanza in trouble and Havoc pulls him out to the floor again. They're doing a really good job here of making Matanza seem vulnerable and that's going to keep the fans more into the match. Havoc grabs a cross armbreaker followed by something like a Lethal Injection. The shooting star only gets two and that's probably going to wrap up Havoc's chances. A quick Wrath of the Gods retains Matanza's title at 7:20.

Rating: B-. This was an interesting choice for the season opener as Son of Havoc gets a chance at the title while Matanza doesn't get to show off as much as usual. I'm not sure if this was the best way to get the fans going but again it seems like this is the start of a second half instead of a fresh season.

PJ Black, Johnny Mundo, Jack Evans and Taya come in to see Dario with Mundo demanding a title shot. Dario says no because they recently lost the Trios Titles. We see the team laying out Angelico and crushing his leg in a car door. Odds are that writes Angelico off TV. Dario still won't give him a title shot so Mundo will settle for the Gift of the Gods Title. Still no, but Dario gives Taya a shot at Sexy Star instead.

Ivelisse is in the ring to talk about how Catrina cost her at Ultima Lucha. That means it's time for a challenge to a match at Ultima Lucha Tres. Catrina appears on the balcony and says bring it on so Ivelisse says Catrina is dead.

Gift of the Gods Title: Taya vs. Sexy Star

Taya is challenging and Striker mentions that the Gift of the Gods Title has never been successfully defended. Now that's the kind of stuff he should be telling us, not dropping Henry Godwinn references. Taya grabs a front facelock and the announcers debate Johnny Smith vs. Johnny Saint.

Some double knees to the face gets two on Taya but she misses a moonsault. Star makes her comeback as Striker asks what would happen if Taya won the title instead of Mundo. Striker: "Sometimes there's no time for pants." I'll let you imagine the context. Cue Mundo and company (the Worldwide Underground) but Evans collides with Taya to give Star the pin at 5:38.

Rating: C. This was fine. It's really cool that the title just happened to be on the line between two women but it's something that so many others on the roster want. Mundo's quest for the title with lackeys by his side could make him an interesting high level heel for the season and he can easily back it up in the ring. Not a great match here but it set some stuff up for the long term.

Star gets beaten down until Fenix, Drago and Aerostar make the save. You can almost guarantee an eight person tag.

Dario is on the phone when Marty the Moth comes in. Apparently Marty had some people help Dario in prison but Dario never wants his time in jail mentioned again. Marty wants to be Lucha Underground Champion but instead he gets Killshot next week in a Weapons of Mass Destruction match. There's something very unique about the idea of no one knowing what happens in these backstage segments. It's like no one watches the show which doesn't make a ton of sense, but at least it's something they stick with all the time.

Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Pentagon Dark

They stare each other down to start until Rey sends him outside. That just earns him some chops but Pentagon stops to glare at the referee. The fans don't seem sure who to cheer for as Pentagon was getting close to being the anti-hero last season but cut it off at the end. A big superkick drops Mysterio, only to have Pentagon take too much time on top and get hurricanranaed down.

Pentagon takes it outside again but Mysterio pops right back up with a tornado DDT on the floor. That earns Rey a pumphandle driver for two back inside with Striker going into a weird tangent about Rey having his kids' college paid for and there being no reason for him to kick out. Another superkick blasts Rey but Pentagon stops to yell at Vampiro, who just sits and stares. Vampiro gets out of his chair and walks away as Mysterio escapes the package piledriver. The 619 and a middle rope Canadian Destroyer of all things puts Pentagon away at 8:34.

Rating: B-. Another good but not great match here as the Vampiro vs. Pentagon story continues for no real logical reason. My guess continues to be that Vampiro has a new protege to take down Pentagon (Puma would make sense) but I really could go with Pentagon being done with Vampiro altogether. Oh and Pentagon should have won here. That really doesn't need much of an explanation.

Pentagon goes for Rey's arm but Dragon Azteca Jr. makes the save. Puma is thinking about the loss to Mysterio when Vampiro comes in and says Puma has been off since he lost to Mil Muertes. If Puma wants to be back to his old self, he needs to beat Muertes. Puma was expecting Vampiro to ask him to get rid of Pentagon (Kentucky boys think alike) but Vampiro says it's all about Puma to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I know I've said it multiple times already but this felt like the start of the second half of the season. We really didn't get any major plot developments other than Dario already being out of prison. Most of the stories are picking up where they left off and that's a good thing as so many of them felt incomplete. It's a good next episode though and they have a lot of places to go as this season goes on.

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Impact Wrestling – September 8, 2016: We Want Wrestling And Hat Eating Giraffes!

Impact Wrestling

Date: September 8, 2016

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: D'Angelo Dinero, Josh Matthews

We have arrived. Unfortunately it's not at Bound For Glory or anything that's going to matter in the long run, but we've reached Final Deletion II: This Time It's REALLY Final. In other words, Decay is going to the Hardy Compound to fight Matt and Jeff in what's going to be a big mess that you may or may not find highly entertaining. Let's get to it.

Senor Benjamin and Vanguard I tell us that these segments will be performed by professionals and no animals were harmed in making this.

We see a clip from last week with Reby saying prepare the battlefield.

Senor Benjamin digs graves for Decay as we hear an operatic version of the Obsolete song.

Matt tells Senor Benjamin to prepare the personal zoo for visitation.

Here are Mike Bennett and Maria with something to say. Mike says don't bite the hand that feeds you, which is what Moose has been doing lately. It was Bennett that brought Moose in and paid him but thanks to a strongly worded text message, Moose has been fired. With him out of the way, Mike can become World Champion like he deserves. This brings out Dixie Carter of all people to say people are here to watch wrestling. Tell me Dixie: how much time is Final Deletion II getting tonight? Mike says no one appreciates either himself or Maria but he knows Dixie is about to put him in the main event. Dixie says not so fast because Mike will be in a match against, of course, Moose. Mike and Maria wisely run off.

Post break Mike and Maria yell at Dixie, who says Mike is in breach of contract if he doesn't fight. As a bonus, Maria is no longer in charge of the Knockouts because she has to defend the Knockouts Title against an opponent to be determined next week.

Gail Kim/Jade vs. Allie/Sienna

Sienna and Gail start things off because it's always Gail first. Allie gets tagged in and is promptly run over by a shoulder to send her outside. Sienna tells Allie to stay out of it because she's not a wrestler. The fans want Allie but get Sienna's running splash on Gail instead. The AK47 is broken up but Sienna still won't tag Allie in. Jade comes in with her kicks and Allie accidentally tags herself in and hits Sienna by mistake. Sienna runs Allie over with the Silencer and Jade gets the pin at 4:38.

Rating: D. This was angle advancement though I'm really not sure where this is going. Allie is being turned face but how do you go from her not being able to do basic stuff properly to being able to fight someone like Sienna? I still don't care about Gail, Jade or Sienna but that's the product of forcing our way to Gail vs. Maria despite it being a squash on paper.

Billy Corgan has a major announcement but won't say what it is.

Back to the Hardy Compound with Matt bringing the rest of the team to his personal zoo. That means a giraffe named George Washington

eats a hat and the brothers Hardy fighting a kangaroo named Smoking Joe Frazier. Later, Matt, described as a spot monkey whisperer, talks to monkeys named after members of the X-Division. Then a tiger tells Matt that Decay arrives tonight. I really don't know what I just saw but it's giving me flashbacks to Mean Gene and George Steele in the Detroit Zoo so we'll declare this awesome.

Corgan is in the ring and unveils the Grand Championship, which is replacing the now retired King of the Mountain Title. This brings out Drew Galloway to say he's 6'5, thirty one years old and has sixteen years experience so how can anyone else be the choice? Corgan says this is the evolution of wrestling and we get a video giving us the rules

3 rounds

3 minutes per round

The match can end at any time but each round is scored on a 10 point system and if no one wins in the nine minute time limit (yes a nine minute time limit), three judges will declare a winner.

There will be an eight man tournament and the first champion will be crowned at Bound For Glory. Galloway says he is this business but here's Aron Rex to say this started over a title and it's ending with Drew going back to Scotland in a medical helicopter. Corgan says not so fast because we've got a tournament match right now.

Grand Championship Tournament First Round: Braxton Sutter vs. Drew Galloway

The judges are just unnamed people and the lights are down for some reason. Drew gets in a belly to belly and says that's a ten. A boot to the face gets two for Galloway and he fires off chops in the corner as this is one sided so far. Some right hands have Sutter in more trouble and the first round ends at just over three minutes. The first round goes to Drew 10-9 all around, giving us a 30-27 score.

Sutter gets beaten up for the first minute of the second round before he snaps Drew's throat across the top rope to take over. A

superplex gets two on Galloway and a snap powerslam gets the same. Sutter pounds away as Josh says Drew has given up his back (because this is a UFC match) and the second round ends. The scores go 10-9, 10-9 and 9-10 in Sutter's favor....which means the match is even because they've won a round each. Sure why not. Drew gets in a piledriver and the Iron Maiden makes Sutter tap at 8:03 (including breaks between rounds).

Rating: D. So to recap, the number of points you get don't count because it's based on who wins two rounds? In other words, they're trying to make this like UFC but want to switch it just enough that it's not UFC? Ignoring the scoring system (never been a fan in wrestling), this was a bad match with the guys mainly chopping each other and then pounding away like a UFC fight to end the rounds. Oh and again: nine minute time limits. How can that be a good idea?

During the break, Rockstar Spud attacked Sutter.

A guy leaves a liquor store and runs into Rosemary. Sexual innuendo is exchanged and Decay attacks, leaving the guy in the road and stealing the truck. Abyss says he's heard Cameron is beautiful this time of the year.

We go to a press conference for the main event of Bound For Glory. Corgan, Ethan Carter III and Lashley all come out to their entrance music with the fans/press waving their arms to Ethan's song. Corgan talks about how this is the kind of match you're going to remember in twenty years. Carter sees a monster in Lashley but he also sees a coward behind those sunglasses.

Lashley destroyed a division and that's not cool. They started fighting back in England over Kurt Angle's broken body (Lashley: "I did that.") and it ends at Bound For Glory. Lashley talks about being the guy that can defend Impact from other organizations but Carter says he's beaten everyone and Lashley will be no different. Lashley goes on a rant about everyone he's hurt and how Carter will be no different (that sounds familiar). A brawl broke out and the "press" just awkwardly watched. This is by far the best thing on the show tonight but that's just because it's less insane than the other

stuff.

The brawl continued after a break with Lashley throwing Carter out of a door and through some wood.

Video on Jesse Godderz and how excited he is for the Grand Championship tournament.

Grand Championship Tournament First Round: Eli Drake vs. Jesse Godderz

Apparently you get points for aggressiveness, controlling the action and physicality. They trade arm work to start with Godderz working on a chinlock. A dropkick and forearm get two for Jesse and it's a few armdrags to wrap up the first round. Jesse wins the first round 29-28 with the announcers turning into analysts in between rounds.

Drake hammers away in the corner and gets two off a DDT. A powerslam gets the same but Jesse gets in a forearm, followed by the Adonis Lock. Drake rides out the clock to end the round and it goes to Godderz again. The final round begins with Drake hitting some kind of a powerbomb but getting caught in the Adonis Lock again. An Angle Slam gets two on Eli, only to have him hit Blunt Force Trauma for the quick pin at 9:24 total.

Rating: D+. This was another basic match with a gimmick attached that makes it feel more "real" because that's what wrestling fans tune in to see on a show featuring a boxing kangaroo. I like Drake and Godderz has grown on me tremendously but there's nothing you can do when you're having three mini matches and have to play to some judges who aren't likely to mean much in this whole tournament.

We recap Galloway and Rex's issues over the last few weeks.

Rex is kicking stuff over and really doesn't feel like talking. He's talked and performed for years but he's done thinking. So here's the problem: there's a good chance these two are going to wind up in the finals of the Grand Championship tournament at Bound For Glory. Ok, cool. Those two fighting for a title is fine. What's not cool is having this big, violent feud's first match be in this rigidly timed format with a nine minute time limit. Let them beat the heck out of

each other instead of going to a judges' decision or having to get the match done fast. Think this stuff through.

It's time for Final Deletion II. Decay goes after Senor Benjamin but he turns a shovel around to show the word DELETE. We cut to Decay arriving at the house, which Rosemary calls home sweet home. They look through the window to see Reby holding Maxill but here's Matt, who KNEW THEY WOULD COME.

Back from a break and it's time for the showdown with the Hardys (the three adults) holding up their fireworks. Abyss: "THIS IS NOT BEAUTIFUL!" Hang on because there are going to be a lot of very quick cuts in this thing. The Hardys chase them off with the fireworks and a ladder is knocked over. It's really hard to see what's going on here but for some reason fireworks are being shot horizontally at Decay but a camera cut shows them exploding in the air.

Matt sends Reby back to the house as Decay hides behind ye olde dilapidated boat. Abyss tells someone to get to the house and Jeff dropkicks the boat into the water. Cue Senor Benjamin to say Matt needs the boat. Jeff disappears and Benjamin starts pulling the boat but Joseph Park walks out of the water. Park: "Brother Benjamin! I loved you in Final Deletion!" Benjamin tazes Park and puts him in a conveniently placed bulldozer.

It's off to Steve, who tries to send Jeff face first into a fire inside a big tire. That earns Steve a sitout gorbuster into a pool and they fight underwater. Matt is walking through smoke and calling for Rosemary as Benjamin dumps Park (presumably) into a grave. Jeff chokes Steve out under the water and sits on the side of the pool, only to be pulled back in ala the end of Friday the 13th.

Back to Benjamin who laughs at the grave but Abyss pops out to choke him. Steve and Jeff fight over a pool toy but it's back to Abyss going after Matt and pulling out Janice. Jeff takes the shot to the ribs for his brother but here's Vanguard I to launch rockets at Decay. The Hardy symbol in the grass is lit on fire with Steve inside. We cut back to the house where Rosemary has Maxill.

Vanguard I tells her to put him down so she blows mist at the drone to knock it offline. Maxill escaped somewhere in there and here's Matt to say Rosemary has crossed a line. She mists him but he sucks it into his mouth and spits it back at her. Maxill staggers over to Matt as Reby reappears. The family is reunited but we cut back to Jeff who is laying on the ground in agony. Steve laughs at the fallen Benjamin and a car, I guess containing Decay, leaves to end the show.

So yeah, the Final Deletion is basically Sharknado. It was a lot of fun the first time because it was just so stupid but the second version is really just a bigger budget version where you expect the same stuff over and over again. Other than the random Joseph Park cameo (really funny), this was a lot of the same bits that they did the first time but without the "what am I watching" reactions. I had fun with it and all but I really don't need to see this again unless they come up with something fresh next time. It also doesn't help that this set up (in theory) a regular tag match at Bound For Glory. Isn't that kind of backwards?

Overall Rating: D. Let's get this one out of the way right now: there was an idea here. This show was an attempt to try a lot of different stuff and not just do the same old ideas that we've covered for so many months if not years. I can give them a lot of credit for that attempt but that doesn't mean it's something that worked.

The wrestling here was bad and as is so often the case, that's not on the wrestlers themselves. The tag match was built around Allie not knowing what to do and the other two matches were hamstrung by the time constraints and rules. Unfortunately that's all the wrestling we had here as the Final Deletion is just an insane segment and not a match by any stretch. I really didn't care much for this show but it's an example where they tried to do something different, which you really don't see often in wrestling. There's certainly an audience that wants to see this but I don't know how big it really is.

Results

Jade/Gail Kim b. Sienna/Jade – Silencer to Jade

Drew Galloway b. Braxton Sutter – Iron Maiden

Eli Drake b. Jesse Godderz – Blunt Force Trauma

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Monday Night Raw – April 8, 2002 (2016 Redo): This Made Me Mad

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 8, 2002

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 13,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Hopefully things pick up a little bit after last week's mess of a debut for the solo red show. Backlash is in thirteen days and it's really not clear what we should be expecting from either brand, save for some of the top matches. Steve Austin is officially on Raw though and you know he's going to do something big. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Vince deciding that Hulk Hogan will be #1

contender instead of HHH. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt that they didn't change their minds so quickly but that doesn't make for an interesting storyline.

Opening sequence.

Undertaker comes out to start and wants to know what's going on around here. You and me both big man. Last week he came out here and challenged HHH and the champ accepted. Now he's out of the match for the sake of HHH vs. Hulk Hogan and that's just unacceptable. This show isn't going anywhere until someone explains this so here's Ric Flair to try and calm things down. He was wrong when he made the match because that was up to Vince but Undertaker doesn't run things around here.

Undertaker doesn't buy it because he thinks Flair is still mad about Wrestlemania. If Flair knows what's good for him, he'll make Undertaker #1 contender for the match after Backlash. That means Austin time because we haven't seen Austin vs. Undertaker in long enough. Well to be fair it had been a whole eleven months since they had a bad match.

Austin isn't happy with the idea of Undertaker getting a title match because he has a stupid bandana, tattoos, gloves, pants and boots. Maybe Flair is scared but Austin would rather ask why Undertaker has a shirt on that says Deadman. This WHAT game is already getting annoying but it might be due to the last fourteen years or so.

Austin wants an answer so Flair makes TWO #1 contenders matches (Austin vs. Scott Hall, Undertaker vs. Rob Van Dam) because both of these guys have attacked him in recent weeks. In other words, it's a mini tournament but it's not clear if Van Dam or Hall can get the title shot at all. Heaven forbid we just cut out the nonsense and give us the only match it could realistically be.

Flair says this is about becoming #1 contender and then wants to explain what he means. Undertaker: "I know what you mean!" Now hang on a second there Deadman. All he's done is explain it in very basic detail so we can't be sure that common wrestling fans understood it. Undertaker makes bald jokes and gets punched to the floor but Austin won't Stun Flair due to threats of Somehow this took well over fifteen minutes and I can personally guarantee you this was NOT needless filler.

Hardcore Title: Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Booker T.

Booker is challenging but before we get going, he's got something to say too. Well of course he does. Apparently people are here to see the Spinarooni so let's pause while he gives the people what they want. Bubba: "Play some funky music for this white boy!" JR calls Bubba overly Caucasian before they fight out to the floor. It's such a shame to see the Alliance members just not being able to get along like this. Bubba starts throwing in the weapons, which of course include a trumpet.

The middle rope backslash misses (only one of those a century) and Booker hammers away (Lawler: "HIT HIM WITH THE TRUMPET!") with trashcan lids. Bubba gets in a Samoan drop and hits some big elbows but there's no D-Von to get the tables. The delay lets Booker get in a spinebuster but here's Goldust with another referee. Bubba powerbombs Goldust through the table and pins him, which somehow ends the match against Booker.

Rating: D-. In addition to the boring match, we also got a really stupid ending with the actually challenger not even being pinned. This division needs to die already as they're completely out of ideas and even their own rules don't make sense a lot of the time. Bubba dancing was funny enough but this was even more filler on a show that has been full of it so far.

Trish Stratus (looking GREAT tonight) isn't pleased with Molly Holly attacking her last week but William Regal cuts her off to talk about wanting to hurt Spike Dudley. Apparently Spike is an abortion on society and will be turned into a vegetable.

Kane is reading the Divas Magazine (I'm sure he only reads the articles) and assures Terri that just because his face is burned, the rest of him is just fine. He loves freaks and declares them cool before sucking up to the Arizona Diamondbacks fans. Where has this Kane been for the other eighteen years?

X-Pac plays with his nunchucks and tells the NWO that he's got this on his own.

Kane vs. X-Pac

Falls count anywhere for reasons that aren't clear. X-Pac jumps him at the entrance and kicks away to start but gets clotheslined out to the floor. They head into the crowd and then into the back where the NWO beats Kane down to give X-Pac the pin. This wasn't even two minutes long.

X-Pac steals Kane's mask and gives him a Conchairto but Bradshaw makes the save. I mean, he wasn't on time and didn't prevent anything but he did in fact show up.

Flair suspends Nash. Odds are he's hurt again.

European Title: William Regal vs. Spike Dudley

Spike is challenging and hits Regal in the face with the brass knuckles to win in three seconds. The referee is fine with Regal being knocked unconscious before the bell.

Random people celebrate with Spike and I'm sure the fact that they all have 7-11 Slurpees with them is a coincidence. Bubba comes up and congratulates Spike in what's supposed to be a nice moment.

Rob Van Dam vs. Undertaker

Non-title and if Undertaker wins he's #1 contender at Backlash, whatever that means. Undertaker rips at Van Dam's face to start and clotheslines him in the corner because the Intercontinental Champion is miles beneath him. Undertaker kicks and elbows Van Dam in the head as this is completely one sided so far. The legdrop hits the apron though and Van Dam hits his moonsault off the apron.

Back in and Van Dam botches his top rope kick, hitting Undertaker in the leg by mistake. At least it makes sense even if it wasn't on purpose. Van Dam goes up but gets superplexed for two, meaning it's time for a chair. Well to be fair they've been wrestling (read as Undertaker has been basically squashing him) for about seven minutes now.

A Van Daminator sets up the Five Star but here's Eddie Guerrero to go after Rob. As usual, the referee is TOTALLY FINE with this and the brawl allows Undertaker to grab a chokeslam for a near fall. Rob kicks the knee out and hits the top rope kick to the chest. The Five Star looks to finish but Eddie gets in a belt shot, setting up the Last Ride to send Undertaker....somewhere for something.

Rating: D+. It's nice for a match to get some time and I'm glad Undertaker didn't pin the champ clean but egads they were piling up the nonsense on this one. We had interference on the floor (not a DQ), a chair and a belt shot with Undertaker looking like he would have rather been anywhere else. Like on Smackdown, where there's a lot less of this nonsense.

Trish Stratus is in the ring for her match but first, Terri asks

Molly Holly if she's upset because she's not as beautiful as someone like Trish. This is one of those things that I can't stand about wrestling culture (and culture in general): Molly isn't good enough because she's not Trish. I for one would never be interested in a 24 year old with shoulder length brown hair, a very natural look and the body of a professional athlete. After all she's not a great looking blonde with a lot of plastic surgery (nothing against Trish of course as she's gorgeous as well).

Molly says she's beautiful enough and doesn't need to be in paddle on a pole matches. Since this is the WWF though, that makes her a heel because in the WWF's eyes at this point, all that matters is how much skin you show. Not only is that sad but it's one of the worst possible messages you can present.

Trish Stratus vs. Molly Holly

Women's Champion Jazz is on commentary and has a black eye thanks to Trish (house show injury). Molly is back to the brown hair and it really, really suits her. Trish hammers away to start and has to drag Molly back inside. Back in and some shots to the face put Trish down but a Stratusphere draws Jazz to her feet. Trish loads up Stratusfaction off the apron but Jazz hits her in the face with the Women's Title. Molly puts on something like an Indian deathlock before rolling Trish over for a weird looking bridging pin.

Rating: D. Is this show incapable of having a match end clean tonight? I guess we're forgetting Trish vs. Molly (and likely Molly in general) to set up Jazz vs. Trish at Backlash. This match somehow got the second most time on the show so far and it's just going downhill every single segment.

Paul Heyman tells Brock Lesnar to not attack fans, even here in Phoenix.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman with something to say. The fans tell Paul that the Yankees suck but he doesn't seem interested. Some fan. Heyman is now Lesnar's agent because Paul has managed Steve Austin, Undertaker and the WWF as a whole thanks to ECW. The important thing is that Heyman knows how to spot the next big thing, such as Brock Lesnar. We get a long video of Lesnar's destruction to date before the Hardy's run in for the beatdown. A few chair shots to the head that would get them fired today put Lesnar on the floor but can't knock him off his feet. At least he leaves for now before mauling

them later.

Big Show vs. Mr. Perfect

Perfect's offense works as well as it's going to before Show chops him out to the floor. Back in and a low blow (DQ? Anybody?) sets up a PerfectPlex for one. The chokeslam ends Perfect like he's nothing.

Austin takes over Flair's office. Do we really need another angle tonight?

The announcers try to explain the #1 contenders situation and it really doesn't make sense. This includes a bunch of clips from earlier in the night and it's even more filler.

Austin throws Flair's pens around until Ric comes in to FINALLY make it clear: if Austin beats Hall tonight, he faces Undertaker for the #1 contendership. Austin: "Thank you for explaining it to me because I was a little confused." Thanks for speaking up for everyone else Steve.

Scott Hall vs. Steve Austin

Hall has X-Pac (with the Kane mask) in his corner. Austin starts fast (likely wanting to get out of here as fast as possible) and choking with a shirt. They take turns throwing each other to the floor and Hall is sent into the steps. There's no fire to Austin here and it's showing horribly. Back in and an X-Pac distraction lets Hall take over for the first time. The chinlock doesn't go anywhere but Hall does manage to fall down when Austin tries to suplex him for the break. Some slow stomping and punches have Austin down again.

A double clothesline puts both guys down though presumably it's so Hall can have a breather. Back up and an awkward looking Thesz press has Hall in trouble but it's time for a ref bump. X-Pac gets taken out but here's Undertaker to chokeslam Austin. That brings out Bradshaw to fight Undertaker into the crowd. Hall gets the fall away slam and the referee is bumped again so X-Pac can come in. That means Flair comes out to knock X-Pac into a Stunner. Another Stunner to Hall sends Austin to Backlash.

Rating: D-. Both of these guys need to be off this show almost immediately. Austin might have a bit of a role for a while but Hall was a DISASTER here, barely able to do even the most basic stuff right and looking embarrassing in the process. The fact that we had

four people interfere and two ref bumps in a nine minute match to hide how bad this would have been otherwise tells you all you need to know.

Austin Stuns Flair to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. This was horrible and you can pick your favorite reason why. It could be Molly possibly being evil because she's not pretty enough, it could be the horrible wrestling, it could be one screwy finish after another or it could be the main story that was so confusing that multiple people called it complicated. I don't remember a show this bad in a long time and I can't imagine it's going to get much worse than this. The match of the night was the Intercontinental Champion losing in a match just a step above a squash. If that's the best that Raw can do, this show is in big, big trouble.

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New Column: Do Something Else

Taking a look at what feels like a never ending best of seven series.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-do-something-else/>

Cruiserweight Classic – September 7, 2016: That's Not Fandango

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Maruo Ranallo

It's the second half of the semifinals tonight with the other two names getting set for next week's live two hour finale. This show somehow keeps getting better despite already being one of the most entertaining hours of wrestling every week. Tonight we get to see Zack Sabre Jr. in action again and there's nothing wrong with that. Let's get to it.

Preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Zack Sabre Jr. isn't worried about the billions of people he's performing in front of because there's only one opponent in the ring with him at a time.

Noam Dar is the youngest entrant in the tournament but he's fought around the world and knows how to adapt.

Quarterfinals: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Noam Dar

England vs. Scotland. Sabre rides him on the mat to start and grabs a rather rough looking headlock. A dropkick to the knee has Zack in a bit of trouble as Mauro tells us about Dar being a bit jealous of Zack's success and the publicity that comes with it. Dar goes after the leg a bit too much and it's Zack getting in a stomp to the arm to take over. The standing armbar doesn't work yet and it's a

pinfall reversal sequence for some near falls.

Zack gets punched in the face so he grabs a half nelson suplex for another near fall. Dar goes after the leg again but gets kicked in the arm, only to have the Penalty Kick mess up Sabre's leg even worse. Dar gets two more off a running dropkick to the back and there's the kneebar to put Sabre in trouble. That's reversed into a cross armbreaker and a rollup for two on Dar.

They strike it out again until Dar gets caught in the armbreaker, sending him straight to the ropes. Sabre shows off his lack of common sense by trying a top rope knee drop, only to bang it up again. Dar comes off the top with a double stomp to the leg and there's the kneebar. Sabre can't reach the ropes so he rolls outside to put both guys down in a crash. Zack has to dive back in at nine but he seems to have injured his shoulder. A bunch of stomps to the arm have Zack in trouble but he pulls Dar down and puts on the Rings of Saturn with his legs, bending Dar's arms so far back that I cringe as Dar gives up at 15:48.

Rating: B+. Really good chess match here as they spent the whole time working on the limbs until one of them had to give up. There's a story in the end with Dar switching gears to go after the arm instead of the already injured leg but Sabre stuck with his guns to win with what he had set up all night. This was great stuff and that's all you can expect from Sabre. Dar more than held his own though and that's a positive sign for his future on Raw.

Dar can barely stand for the official decision so they hug from the mat.

TJ Perkins knows he's one of the best in the world because you have to think that in this business.

Rich Swann says you'll see the best of him when the pressure is on.

Quarterfinals: TJ Perkins vs. Rich Swann

Philippines vs. America. The fans sing Rich's theme song in the ultimate sign of respect. They trade near falls to start and it's an early standoff. It's off to the battle over the wristlock as we hear

about how Eddie Guerrero both influenced them. Perkins dances out of a headscissors and does that bicep kissing thing (yes I know what it's called). Mauro talks about rap lyrics until Swann stops to dance. Mauro: "It's a dab duel at the Cruiserweight Classic."

Rich sends him outside but tweaks his knee on a moonsault attempt. Perkins isn't about to let that go and dropkicks him down before going with a belly to back suplex. There's a chance he didn't see the knee injury so this isn't necessarily bad psychology. Perkins starts in on the leg until Rich hits him in the face a few times. Simple yet effective. A jumping DDT gets two on TJ but Rich's leg gives out on a hurricanrana attempt.

The second attempt works a bit better though as Perkins is put down, setting up a kick to the head for two. Perkins grabs a quick kneebar but Rich is right next to the ropes. A tiger driver out of nowhere gets two on Perkins and Rich kicks him square in the head. Perkins comes right back with a fireman's carry into a kick to the head (think a GTS but with a kick instead of a knee), followed by the kneebar to make Swann submit at 17:01.

Rating: B-. This got better once they cut out the dancing stuff and got down to a serious match. Swann is really growing on me and I'm very surprised that they went with Perkins here. That being said, I can't imagine they'll go with him over Ibushi next week. Still though, good match here and it got a lot better as they started getting serious.

Perkins immediately checks on Swann and seems almost sad that he had to beat him.

A video on next week's final three matches wrap us up.

Overall Rating: A-. Yeah what else were you expecting here? Of course this was awesome as the Cruiserweight division has the potential to be something great once they finally get to Raw, though I have a bad feeling they're going to just have random matches without the storylines to make everything work. Still though, really good show here as the quality wrestling continues.

Results

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Noam Dar – Rings of Saturn

TJ Perkins b. Rich Swann – Kneebars

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NXT – September 7, 2016: Well You See... What Happened Was...

NXT

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're in an interesting place here as the next Takeover has been announced for November but the taping schedule hasn't caught up to the announcement yet. Therefore we're still in the fallout stage from Brooklyn, meaning we're likely going to see some stuff being set up for the next big TV show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

TM61 vs. Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari

Thorn and Nese start things off with Tony doing a sweet drop down

into a nip up to avoid a clothesline. Neither guy can do anything so it's off to Miller vs. Daivari for a change of pace. A jawbreaker sends Miller into the corner and Nese adds a dropkick to set up a big flip dive to the floor. Unfortunately he takes out his partner in the process, only to have Thorn dive over all of them, barely grazing his opponents.

Back in and Nese gets two off a running knee (I'm getting sick of running strikes. It seems everyone uses one of those these days.), followed by some stomping in the corner. We take a break and come back with the tag off to Miller as the crowd is really not interested so far. A high/low gets two on Nese but he comes right back with a superkick. Ariya gets two off a frog splash but walks into Thunder Valley for the pin at 10:30.

Rating: C. I really don't get the appeal of TM61 and the fans being that silent didn't do them any favors. They're really just two guys in trunks who can wrestle a good enough match but that's not good enough when we've had American Alpha, the Revival and Gargano/Ciampa tearing the house down every time they're in the ring. This was more about the cruiserweights though and they looked fine out there.

Earlier today, Asuka talked about the crowd being so excited in Brooklyn and how she now respects Bayley. Even though Bayley fought hard, Asuka fought harder and retained the title. Asuka has cleaned out the division and she defends the title for herself and Japan. She says something for her Japanese fans and says no one is ready for her.

Steve Cutler wants to know what Shinsuke Nakamura has sacrificed to get here. Cutler has sacrificed four years of his life to get this opportunity. People will respect him.

Ember Moon vs. Leah Von

Von is a blonde newcomer. Ember starts fast with a springboard spinning crossbody but gets taken down into a chinlock. That goes nowhere as Moon kicks her in the ribs, hits a flipping clothesline and finishes with the top rope Stunner (possibly called the Eclipse) at 2:45.

No Way Jose appreciated Bobby Roode's fashion sense and isn't changing for anyone.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa will get a match at the

Cruiserweight Classic final and if they win they might get a Tag Team Title shot.

Austin Aries vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Almas has dropped the hat and suspenders. The fans are all over Almas to start and Aries gets them on his side with a dropkick to the face and a little rest in the corner. Almas comes back with a dropkick of his own and a good looking hurricanrana. Aries is just fine though as he shoves Almas off the top for a nasty crash as we take a break.

Back with Aries dropping a knee for a cocky cover before we hit the chinlock. Almas sends him crashing into the ropes and scores with a springboard dropkick. That just earns him the running dropkick in the corner but Aries misses a charge in the corner. The running knees miss (again with the running strike) and a powerbomb sets up the Last Chancery to make Almas tap at 11:48.

Rating: C-. I don't know what's with this show so far tonight but they're not clicking so far. Then again maybe it's just Almas being such an uninteresting character with a really basic offense that feels like the generic template you would get if you selected high flier in a Smackdown vs. Raw game. Just turn him heel and let him be bitter so people don't have to be bored with him every time. Aries winning is fine and that's all that mattered here.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Steve Cutler

Non-title with Samoa Joe on commentary. They start slow with Nakamura not exactly treating Cutler like a serious threat. We're quickly into the corner for Good Vibrations before Nakamura starts in with the strikes. The reverse exploder sets up Kinshasa for the pin on Cutler at 3:21.

Rating: D+. Not much to say here because there wasn't much to it. Cutler could have been anyone in this spot and it would have been the same match as Nakamura dismantled him in just a few minutes. Joe vs. Nakamura II should be a lot of fun, especially if they're allowed to beat the heck out of each other for twenty minutes.

Joe walks away from commentary to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I really wasn't feeling the show this week as two of the matches just kept going and the other two were too short to mean much. They're definitely in need of some energy but luckily

this isn't Raw, where such a thing sounds impossible. Not a very good show this week but it certainly wasn't bad.

Results

TM61 b. Ariya Daivari/Tony Nese – Thunder Valley to Daivari

Ember Moon b. Leah Von – Eclipse

Austin Aries b. Andrade Cien Almas – Last Chancery

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Samoa Joe – Kinshasa

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Smackdown – September 6, 2016: This One Is A Little Different

Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

I'm not sure how but we're already at the go home show for Backlash. At this point there are five announced matches (assuming you count a tournament final as an announced match) which means we're going to get a lot more stuff announced tonight or Sunday's matches are going to be very long. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring with the Smackdown Women's Title.

Sunday's Six Pack Challenge will be an elimination match (there's how they fill in some time) but before we get there, we'll be having a six women tag match. First though, we're going to have a forum with all six getting some time to talk. We'll start with Becky Lynch but before she can say anything, Daniel has to plug Total Bellas.

The fans clearly aren't interested so Bryan lets Becky talk about being the #1 female Smackdown draft pick. Her journey has brought her here but Natalya cuts her off. Natalya says the Draft was the worst night of her career because Smackdown was supposed to be her kingdom but now she has to put up with Becky and the unnatural hair.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

Dean Ambrose pours most of a bottle of sugar into his coffee.

The bosses are talking about the women's match when Miz comes in. He's not happy about having to defend the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler at Backlash and thinks it's because of what he said to Bryan a few weeks ago. Bryan says Miz can either fight Ziggler or just hand over the title right now. Miz walks away with the title intact. So much for Bryan and Miz not being on screen at the same time, which is a good thing.

The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title with Ziggler on commentary. What does it say that I knew this was going to be Crews because he's the designated midcard

jobber? Crews runs him over to start and blocks a headlock with raw power. A shot to the face puts Miz on the floor and Crews moonsaults onto him as we go to a break.

Back with Miz choking in the corner as Ziggler keeps talking about how winning and losing doesn't matter as long as he tries his best. You know, two weeks after talking about how winning was all that mattered. No wait, it was winning the title and then defending it which mattered because that's the story they were going with this week. Miz's running corner clothesline has Crews in trouble but he sends Miz outside. That means it's time to get in Dolph's face and slap him in the jaw, only to have Miz shove Crews into him. A quick posting stuns Crews and the Skull Crushing Finale ends Apollo at 10:12.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

Post match Ziggler chases Miz off and has the title in front of him. Ziggler invites Miz in to get the belt but he sends Maryse in instead. See, that's the kind of thing that shows character rather than "well golly I didn't win the match that I said I absolutely had to win but I sure tried and that's what matters" before saying that he has to win the big one (because winning the Intercontinental Title, a title he's held four times already, now counts as the big one).

AJ Styles is livid about video of him getting crotched last week. He yells at the production assistant who provided the video and that's about it.

American Alpha video.

The Usos say they still run this tag team division. The division has been around for about three weeks and they've already had to affirm their dominance? That's not a good sign.

Bray Wyatt talks about men having to fight to survive. They had to learn to deal with predators, who only knew how to hunt and kill. The predator didn't know how to create and one day they became a play thing. History repeats itself and Orton is no longer the predator he once was. Bray is the evolution of man and at Backlash, predator becomes prey.

Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch/Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella, who didn't seem like she kicked out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Becky in trouble as Natalya sends her into the apron and grabs a chinlock. Bliss comes in and grabs a chinlock of her own before Natalya hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Becky finally dives over for the hot tag to Nikki and a Disaster kick gets two on Bliss. The TKO gets two on Carmella with Bliss making the save as everything breaks down. Bliss misses her moonsault knees to the ribs and Carmella's Code of Silence makes Nikki tap at 12:53.

Rating: D. This was bad and there's really no way around it. Between Naomi focusing on looking athletic without having the ability to pull it off, Carmella having all of one good looking move, Bliss not being able to take a move or hit one of her own and Nikki being in the match for two minutes because they're trying to keep her safe, there's only so much Natalya and Becky can do. This division just does not have the depth to work right now and it's showing more and more when there's so little to praise in a match with the whole

division.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

We get a handshake to start but the Usos jump Alpha from behind in what feels like a heel turn. Not that it matters as Alpha comes right back and the Grand Amplitude ends Jimmy at 27 seconds.

Post match (with the replay clipping the thing) the Usos beat Alpha down by sending Jordan shoulder first into the post and superkicking Gable in the knee. Jey puts on a Tequila Sunrise and Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Gable's other leg for a good looking beatdown. The heel turn is a really good idea for the Usos as they've been the exact same team for years now. At least this gives them a little freshening up.

Orton tells a story about a dying man killing a rabbit but getting caught by a snake who wanted the rabbit for himself. The snake didn't attack until after the man had picked up the rabbit because he knew he could have them both. At Backlash, Bray won't know what hit him.

Here's Fandango to say that Tyler Breeze is out finding fabric for their upcoming fashion line. Instead he's found a woman to tango with Fandango but she's a bit too wild for him and he throws her out. Fandango asks for anyone else so here's Kane to chokeslam him. Fans: "GO BIG RED!" (University of Nebraska football chant).

AJ breaks a guy's phone for not showing him enough respect.

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Hype Bros vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

The Slater Family is in the front row as Slater and Ryder start things off. Zack's middle rope dropkick gets an early two and it's off to Rawley to send Heath outside. Rawley runs Rhyno down and we take an early break. Back with Slater avoiding a splash in the corner but the fans want Rhyno. The hot tag brings in Ryder and Rhyno but Slater tags himself in and gets rolled up for two. Rhyno

saves Heath from the Broski Boot and a Gore ends Ryder at 7:18.

Rating: D+. This was an interesting one as Rhyno was WAY over and the fans are already into Slater but Ryder and Rawley are popular enough that it's hard to have them be heels. Either way, Slater and Rhyno were the best possible option and could get the belts, especially given Gable's knee injury.

We look at the knee injury earlier.

Renee Young doesn't have much of an update on Gable's condition but the Usos come in to say they were letting out their bottled up aggression. They've been putting their bodies on the line for years and the fans turned on them but love American Alpha the second they saw them.

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy. Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena. On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

Overall Rating: C. This show was very different than usual and that's a good thing as they head into a rather weak pay per view. There are only five matches for the show and tonight focused on the matches to crown new champions. The wrestling really wasn't the focus here and it's a good idea to spend this show focusing on everything other than the main event, which has gotten a lot of time already. I really don't see a three hour pay per view based on this card but they've stretched stuff out in other ways before.

Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Naomi/Becky Lynch – Code

of Silence to Bella

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Hype Bros – Gore to Ryder

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Monday Night Raw – September 5, 2016: A Labor Of Boredom

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the last five minutes of Raw and focuses on the big online reaction.

Earlier today Stephanie McMahon demanded a big celebration for Owens. Mick Foley came up and looked really upset. Last week, HHH made him look like a fool and Stephanie won't talk to him about it. Stephanie gets all serious when Foley accuses her of knowing what HHH was going to do. Stephanie: "Who do you think you're talking to?" Oh here we go.

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

Mick and Stephanie are in the ring and welcome Owens (in a SUIT) as the balloons fall and pyro goes off. Owens agrees that he does deserve this before ripping into the fans for making it all about themselves with the YOU DESERVE IT chants. He's known that since the day he set foot in this ring and doesn't need the fans to tell him that all over again. Last week he beat three superstars to win this title and yeah he got a little nudge from HHH.

Owens had already done 98% of the work though so tonight it's officially the Kevin Owens Show. This brings out a ticked off Rollins to say this isn't about Owens. Instead he goes off on Stephanie for letting him down last week. Owens says this isn't about Seth but Rollins keeps going on his rampage and says everyone is in Stephanie's pocket. Kevin has been HHH's chosen one since the day he debuted in NXT but Seth is here to burn the whole thing to the ground.

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth punches him in the face. Stephanie suspends Seth indefinitely but Foley immediately overturns it, drawing him one of the loudest pops he's gotten in years. Instead of suspending him, Foley gives Seth (Foley to Seth: "I've never really liked you.") the title match at Clash of the Champions.

This was good stuff for the most part, assuming you can ignore HHH helping Rollins last week not being brought up. Rollins seemingly turning face (or at least starting it off) is a really good thing and WAY overdue but it certainly seems to be a slower burn than a full on version. Either way, Clash just got a lot better looking on paper.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Non-title and Charlotte has given Dana a clipboard to take notes. Bayley starts in on the arm and throws some Japanese armdrags, only to have Charlotte send her face first into the buckle. That just fires Bayley up and she sends Charlotte into the buckles a few times instead. Charlotte heads outside and Bayley tries a dropkick under the ropes (think Sami's diving DDT) but leaves it way short, leaving her to just kick Charlotte in the chest instead. Bayley is favoring her knee as we go to a break.

Back with Charlotte holding the figure four neck lock and actually getting two off a rollup. Charlotte slams the bad leg into the corner and then wraps it around the leg. That sets up a half crab and DDT on the knee but Bayley grabs a rollup to break the momentum. Some limping ax handles to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Dana pulls Charlotte out of the way of an elbow. Somehow that's not a DQ so Bayley kicks Charlotte into Dana and hits the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 12:40.

Rating: C+. The important thing here is the time. This match worked because it had some time to set up the leg injury and the ending made sense (save for ANOTHER lack of a disqualification) due to the extra focus it received. You can't do anything important in a four minute match and it helped so much to actually let this thing go

somewhere for a change. Good stuff and the PPV rematch is obvious.

Connor's Cure video for children's cancer awareness month.

Charlotte yells at Dana, who promises to make up for it. That earns her one heck of a slap in the face.

Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast with a dropkick and sends Jericho outside for a suicide dive. Oh yeah he's wrestling like a face. Back in and Jericho slaps him a few times as the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Jericho sends him face first into the buckle and we take a break. Back with Rollins hammering away and getting two off the Sling Blade. A Blockbuster gets the same and Rollins might as well have a big sign saying YEP I'M A FACE NOW around his neck.

Rollins dropkicks him out of the air but gets caught in the Walls. That goes as far as you would expect and Rollins' low superkick gets two. Rollins gets caught on top but still shoves Jericho off, only to miss the frog splash. The Lionsault gets a close two as this is really picking up. The Codebreaker is broken up and a Pedigree puts Jericho away at 13:47.

Rating: B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #3 in the series with Cesaro down 2-0 and coming in with a bad

shoulder/back. Cesaro grabs some rollups for early near falls but a backdrop has him in trouble. Sheamus sends the back into the apron and drives in some knees. The Cloverleaf is blocked but Sheamus grabs four straight Irish Curses for a near fall. With that not working, Sheamus lifts him up for the Celtic Cross but drops it down into a backbreaker. The Brogue Kick makes it 3-0 to Sheamus at 4:06.

Rating: C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Before the match, Enzo thinks he's in labor so Cass, who has watched a lot of ER, performs Lamaze with HOW YOU DOING replacing the "hoo hoo" part. Enzo and Cass take over to start and it's off to a quick break. Back with Enzo in trouble but avoiding a Primo charge and making the hot tag off to Cass. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is broken up and Epico rolls Enzo up with a handful of trunks at 7:05. Too much was in the break to rate but I'd again like to point out that NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE SHINING STARS.

Sami Zayn says his career has been stuck in place since he beat Owens, who is now the Universal Champion. Owens comes in and laughs at the idea that Sami is chasing him now. The race will never be over and Sami says he'll win the title on his own, without HHH handing it to him on a silver platter.

Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

It's time for Anderson and Gallows to not be funny. Now they're

retirement specialists who have already gotten rid of the Dudley Boyz, so now let's welcome the OLD DAY. Cue some New Day impersonators (one on a motorized scooter, one on a walker and one on a cane) to a slow motion version of their theme. The crowd is just silent for this as the Old Day says everything changed for them at Clash of Champions. We get every old person joke you can imagine, including Big E.'s hips going out as he does the swivel.

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

Titus O'Neil is on commentary for reasons of pure torture. Darren gets an early two off a swinging neckbreaker but has to fight out of a chinlock. Titus goes out to ringside as Darren hits the Gut Check for the pin at 2:15.

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

Alicia Fox checks on her injured friend when Nia Jax, who just happened to be there, shows up and laughs. Total Divas is mentioned and Fox yells a lot while throwing things. Nia just leaves as she goes nuts.

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week?

Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

Here's Sasha Banks for an announcement. She talks about how every story has an ending before talking about the Divas Revolution. Back in July 2015, Stephanie McMahon (oh yeah) introduced the Divas Revolution and it was a new era without bra and panties matches (which there hadn't been in YEARS) and no more butterfly title (not for about nine months actually).

This revolution was about every little girl and every person who has been told they're not enough. She used to collect soda cans to try to save up enough money to come to a WWE event. Sasha starts crying as she talks about being injured at Summerslam and she has an update on her condition. Cue Dana Brooke to say she's going to use Sasha's broken body to finish what Charlotte started at Summerslam. Dana goes after Sasha but gets caught in a Bank Statement. The bad news was for Charlotte, who will be facing Sasha at Clash of Champions.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They start slugging it out at the bell and it's quickly outside with Sami going shoulder first into the barricade. Sami does his moonsault off the barricade (and kicks Owens square in the face) as we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock and sending Owens to the floor for back to back flip dives.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two but Owens rolls to the apron before the Helluva Kick. A Stunner over the ropes has Sami in trouble but the half and half suplex gets two on the champ. Sami climbs the ropes but lands on a bad ankle. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami grabs another half and half to drop Kevin on his head. Back in and the ankle gives out again, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin on Sami at 13:05.

Rating: B-. This was their usual good match but you knew Owens wasn't going to lose his first match as the champion. Sami will probably get his title match at some point in the future and that's going to be one heck of a rollercoaster when they finally get there.

Good stuff here though but this show is way past saving.

Post match here's Roman Reigns to a LOUD chorus of booing. Chris Jericho comes out to have Owens' back but Foley prevents the violence. Next week it's Roman vs. Owens and if Reigns wins, it's a triple threat at Clash of the Champions. They had that same booking idea recently on Smackdown and it's still overdone here. Reigns spears Jericho to let off some steam and end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Shining Stars b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Monday Night Raw – February 26, 1996: There's Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 26, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Hopefully things pick up a bit this week as there's going to be a showdown between Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart with a little over a month to go before their WWF World Title match at Wrestlemania XII. Other than that we get another Larry Fling Live skit because we're just that lucky. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Diesel and Undertaker playing mind games with each other. That's an underrated feud and it's cool to see it again.

Opening sequence.

Isaac Yankem D.D.S. vs. Jake Roberts

This is actually Jake's in ring Raw debut. Jake shoves him around to start and it's so weird to see Kane just in pants and with that curly hair. Isaac gets in a clothesline and drives some fists to the face, only to get caught in the DDT for the quick pin.

Rating: D. That DDT was Jake's only major offense in the entire (short) match. This was around the time when Jake was just a disaster in the ring and it was getting harder and harder to watch

him out there. Yankem was long past his expiration date and would return as Fake Diesel a few months after this character finally died.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back due to fan requests.

Bob Holly vs. Diesel

This is a match that Eric Bischoff actually talked about live on Nitro, spoiling it for the audience. You know, because this match needed to be spoiled. Bob's early offense lasts as long as you would expect it to but Diesel keeps looking around for Undertaker to pop up through the ring. Holly makes a comeback and we actually take a break, only to come back to see the Jackknife ending this.

Rating: D-. That's for the break because the post commercial stuff was all of ten seconds long. I can't stand it when they're clearly just stretching a match out for the sake of stretching it out and it happened way too often at this point. To be fair it happens today too and it's every bit as annoying.

Diesel goes to leave and the gong sounds. The lights go out and Undertaker is in the ring but he disappears when Diesel comes close. Coward. They go out again and Undertaker is on the video screen, saying he can play mind games too.

Ahmed Johnson vs. Shinobi

Al Snow as a ninja. Ahmed throws him outside like the jobber with a stupid gimmick that he is and we get a phone call from Goldust, who has a poem for Roddy Piper. As we hear about Goldust wanting to play Piper's bag, Shinobi botches a springboard with Johnson just staring at him. The spinebuster and Pearl River Plunge wrap this up quick.

Mankind talks about playing the piano for his mommy and her friends.

Vince brings out Shawn and Bret for a big interview. Shawn says he has more respect for Bret than anyone in this building and Bret may be the best there was and ever will be, but right now there might be someone better. Bret knows that there's been a lot of time put into this title and he's shown how great he is. His job is to be champion but Shawn has one night to beat him.

They get into a debate about who is in the best condition so here's Roddy Piper with something to say. At Wrestlemania, Piper doesn't want to hear about any tights pulling or a DQ. Oh and he doesn't want to see Shawn's abs because they don't mean anything. Piper

finally gets to the point and introduces the idea of the Iron Man match with the ONE HOUR time limit being the big sticking point.

British Bulldog/Owen Hart vs. Yokozuna

Vince actually says Yokozuna is facing his ex stablemates. Yokozuna elbows and slams Owen to start before doing the same to Bulldog. Double teaming works a bit better and we take a break because this show hasn't gone on long enough yet. Back with Owen missing an elbow drop but Vader comes out for the DQ.

Rating: D-. To be fair it had been a long time since we had a bad match. Yokozuna was just way beyond saving at this point and was little more than a freak show. Vader beating him up would have been fine at Wrestlemania but they were probably better off changing things up for the sake of the fans having to watch those two have a match on their own.

Ahmed Johnson and Jake Roberts come out for the save, albeit with Ahmed doing all the work and Jake walking in slow motion before bringing out the yellow snake. I've heard of worse Plan B's.

We wrap it up with Larry Fling Live with special guests Huckster and Nacho Man. They immediately start with the jokes about Hogan being injured by Woman's shoe. Both of them seem to be involved with Liz and that doesn't go well. Oh and they're both too old to wrestle for the WWF, which is why Hogan would be champion in six years.

Billionaire Ted calls in and Hogan freaks out, hitting everyone with horrible chair shots (ala SuperBrawl VI) while Larry holds a woman's shoe. See, this was actually funny and making fun of WCW for doing stupid stuff, not for whatever Vince's latest issue was.

Overall Rating: F. Other than announcing Wrestlemania's main event gimmick, this was the most worthless show I can remember in a long time. There was nothing worth seeing throughout the show and the Hogan stuff at the end might have been the most entertaining part. On the other show, we had the Alliance to End Hulkamania. In other words, it was a horrible time to be a wrestling fan and it was only going to get worse.

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Monday Night Raw – February 19, 1996: On The Road Again

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 19, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're done with In Your House VI and the big story is that it's time for Wrestlemania. There's barely anything to talk about coming out of last night's show other than Bret is still champion, Diesel vs. Undertaker is pretty clear for Wrestlemania and it's a countdown until Shawn wins the title. Let's get to it.

Sunny, on the beach in a black swimsuit (my goodness) tells us that this show might not be appropriate for all fans.

We recap last night's main event with Undertaker pulling Diesel through the mat.

Intercontinental Title: Razor Ramon vs. Goldust

Goldust is defending and I had forgotten he was even champion at this point. Marlena tries to blow smoke in Razor's face to no effect (not clear how) and it's time to rip off Goldust's robe. A clothesline puts the champ on the floor for a breather as Lawler wonders if Goldust likes being manhandled. Goldust gets in a backdrop and we take a break. Back with Goldust grabbing a sleeper but getting crotched on top a few seconds later. Razor gives him a fall away slam over the top for a bad sounding crash. Jerry: "He probably broke his golden globes!" The belly to back superplex sends

Goldust running up the aisle for the countout.

Rating: D. Nothing match here as it felt like they were out there for about two minutes worth of action. It's pretty clear that this is going to be setting up something in the future and probably would have had it not been for all of Razor's issues at the time. Bad match though and not a good way to start off a show.

Post match Razor grabs the mic and begs Roddy Piper to give him a fight with Goldust because he doesn't want his kids watching that stuff on TV.

Undertaker walks out of a casket.

Slam Jam recaps almost everything from last night and eats up a lot of time.

BodyDonnas vs. Aldo Montoya/Barry Horowitz

And never mind as Vader beats up the jobbers before the match starts.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back.

Sunny sings Happy Birthday to Mr. President. I smell a stupid impression.

Bob Backlund campaigns in the crowd.

Ringmaster vs. Marty Jannetty

Vince during Ringmaster's entrance: "You talk about a stone cold man." Austin isn't interested in having any of this wrestling stuff and sends Marty outside earlier. The Stun Gun sends us to a break and we come back with Austin driving a knee into the ribs. We hit the STF and get some LOUD spot calling, which is the kind of thing Austin would complain about today. We hit a neck crank as the fans aren't that thrilled with Austin as a submission guy. Marty makes his really simple comeback but gets caught in the Million Dollar Dream for the fast submission.

Rating: D+. Marty is a good choice to do a job here as the fans like him and he's certainly going to put on a solid performance in defeat. Austin really needed a feud though as this character is hardly interesting and isn't going anywhere at the moment. To be fair though he had to start somewhere and this is better than a lot of the nonsense that some characters got.

Mankind is coming and might even bring his rat.

Tatanka vs. Undertaker

Undertaker chokes Tatanka into the corner like he's the Undertaker and he's facing Tatanka. A Samoan drop gives Tatanka a breather but here's Diesel with an ax to steal a cameraman as we go to a break. Back with Diesel hacking up Undertaker's casket and Undertaker fighting out of a chinlock. Old School looks to set up the Tombstone but Tatanka counters into a DDT. Diesel is STILL breaking up the casket as the Tombstone puts Tatanka away.

Rating: D-. I'm almost never a fan of a match happening as a backdrop for the angle or whatever else you would call Diesel breaking up a casket. Tatanka can't be around much longer after this as he's certainly not around for Wrestlemania and it's not like he's been interesting in years at this point.

And now, a new twist on the Billionaire Ted skits: Larry Fling Live on BNN (Billionaire News Network). After some stupid jokes, Randy from Sarasota and Terry from Tampa call in. Huckster needs time off because of a shoe to the eye. The third caller is Jane from Hanoi (Ted Turner's wife) and this goes nowhere. Larry brings up the predatory practices that Vince whined about for months and Turner suddenly can't speak about all the charges against him. More next week.

Undertaker and Paul Bearer are angry/distraught to end the show.

Overall Rating: F+. What am I even watching anymore? I know they're getting ready for Wrestlemania but that doesn't mean everything is all ok. The Billionaire Ted skits, which are closing the show almost every week now, just aren't funny. They're basically Vince's therapy airing on TV and that doesn't make for good TV for anyone other than him. The wrestling is the mess that you would expect and these shows get worse and worse every single week.

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